DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 439 974 SO 027 314

TITLE	The Situation in Austria, Finland and Sweden and in the EFTA/EEA Countries (Iceland and Norway). Supplement to the Study on Pre-School and Primary Education in the European Union.
INSTITUTION	EURYDICE European Unit, Brussels (Belgium).
SPONS AGENCY	Commission of the European Communities, Brussels (Belgium). Directorate-General for Education, Training, and Youth.
REPORT NO	D/1996/4008/3
ISBN	ISBN-2-87116-234-4
PUB DATE	1996-02-00
NOTE	60p.; For the primary document, see SO 027 313.
AVAILABLE FROM	EURYDICE European Unit, Rue d'Arlon 15, B-1050 Brussels, Belgium. Tel: 32-2-238-30-11; e-mail: info@eurydice.org; Web site: http//www.eurydice.org.
PUB TYPE	Reports - Descriptive (141)
EDRS PRICE	MF01/PC03 Plus Postage.
DESCRIPTORS	Area Studies; Comparative Education; Early Childhood Education; *Elementary Education; Foreign Countries; *International Cooperation; *International Educational Exchange; Preschool Curriculum; *Preschool Education
IDENTIFIERS	Austria; *European Union; Finland; Iceland; Norway; Sweden

ABSTRACT

This report intends to fill the gap between the original document "Pre-School and Primary Education in the European Union" and the current state with the addition of the new Member States of Austria, Finland, Sweden, Iceland, and Norway. The report is divided into two parts. Part 1, "General Organisation," contains: (1) "The Structure of Education" and (2) "Provision for Pupils in Primary Or Single Structure Schools During Out-of-School Hours." Part 2, "The Education Process," includes: (1) "Pre-School Education"; (2) "Primary Or Single Structure Education"; and (3) "Transition to Lower Secondary Or to the Last Years of Single Structure Education." Appended is a chart showing, by country, the number of pupils in primary education each year. (EH)

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ED 439 974

EURYDICE

Supplement to the study on

PRE-SCHOOL AND PRIMARY EDUCATION IN THE EUROPEAN UNION

The situation in Austria, Finland and Sweden and in the EFTA/EEA countries

FEBRUARY 1996

SO 027 314

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The situation in Austria, Finland and Sweden and in the EFTA/EEA countries (Iceland and Norway)*

* At the time when this document was being prepared, information was not yet available in relation to Liechtenstein.

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This document is published by the European Unit of EURYDICE with financial support from the European Commission (DG XXII: Education, Training and Youth).

Available in DE-EN-FR
D/1996/4008/3
ISBN 2-87116-234-4

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FOREWORD

In 1993, in the context of the work of the Belgian Presidency, the EURYDICE network produced a working document on pre-school and primary education, describing the organisation of these two levels of education in the education systems of the then twelve Member States of the European Union. This document was subsequently issued as a publication in April 1994 at the time when Austria, Finland and Sweden, along with Iceland, Norway and Liechtenstein, were in process of joining the network as part of the implementation of the Agreement on the European Economic Area. Austria, Finland and Sweden have since become full members of the European Union. It soon became clear that there was a need to have available the same information on the education systems of these six new units[1] in the network.

This document is intended to fill the gap and thus provides a useful supplement integral to the basic publication. It has been produced thanks to the contributions of the five new units and follows the arrangement of the contents of the original document. However, the details of the use of school time are not included here, as they appear in the updated version of the EURYDICE document on the Organisation of School Time in the European Union, published in January 1996.

We should like to thank the units concerned for their efficient cooperation in the course of this work. By continuously enriching the information available, the EURYDICE network hopes to provide the actors in the education sector with reliable basic data contributing to an understanding of the functioning of the increasingly diversified education systems.

Luce Pépin
Head of the EURYDICE
European Unit

February 1996

[1] At the time when this document was being prepared, information was not yet available in relation to Liechtenstein.

PART I: GENERAL ORGANISATION

Chapter I
THE STRUCTURE OF EDUCATION

This chapter describes the organisation of the school systems, that is, the education structures for which the Education Ministries are responsible. It therefore contains information only in relation to schools. There are other educational institutions in these countries, coming under the Social Affairs Ministries (Ministry of Children and the Family in Norway), financed by public or private bodies and not forming part of the education system as such. These structures, which cater for younger children and offer alternative provision before the start of compulsory education, are described in Chapter I of Part II of this document.

1. Stages in schooling from age 1 to age 18

Austria, Finland and Sweden, amongst the Member States of the European Union, and Iceland and Norway of the EFTA/EEA countries represent three different models of education systems.

The first model is characterised by a division of the educational process from age 1 to age 18 into two stages, primary and secondary. This is found in **Austria,** where primary education constitutes the first stage (age 6 to age 10) followed by secondary education. This second stage is further divided into a compulsory first phase, for 10- to 14/15-year-olds, and an optional second phase for 15- to 18-year-olds.

The second model also comprises two stages but differently organised, with first a single structure spanning the whole of compulsory education then an upper secondary stage. This is found in Sweden and Norway.

In **Sweden,** there is continuity of education throughout the whole of compulsory education in the *grundskola*. This lasts nine years, beginning at age 7 and ending at age 16. In the new system of upper secondary education *(gymnasieskola)* introduced in 1992/93, all education is organised in study programmes of three years' duration. The pupils attending upper secondary school are usually between 16 and 19 years old.

In **Norway,** this single structure, the *grunnskole*, starts at the age of 7 and lasts nine years. It is however divided into two stages. Upper secondary education covers 16- to 19-year-olds, and includes general and vocational branches in upper secondary schools and vocational training in technical schools.

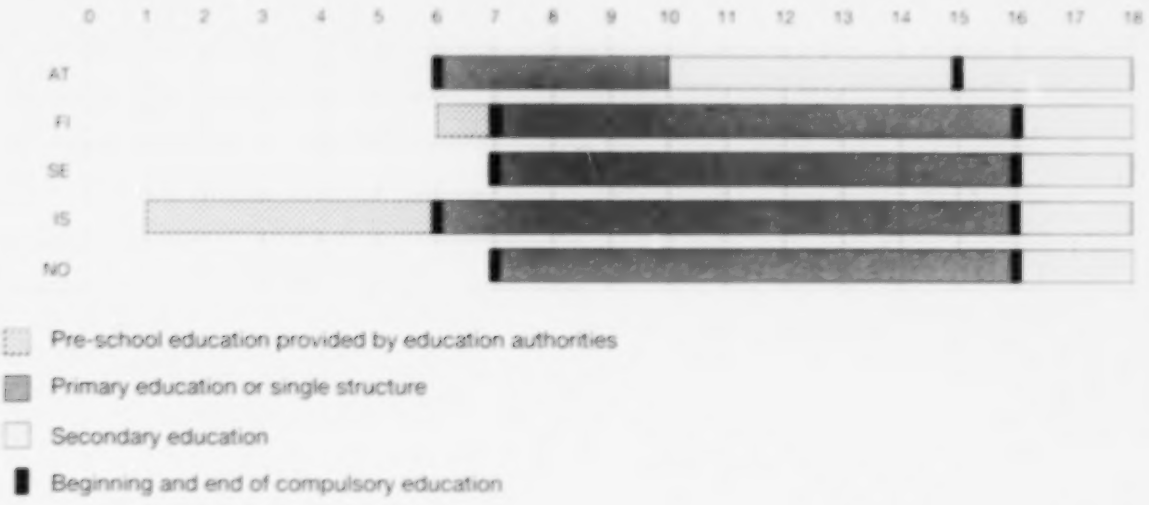
Finally, the third model is in three stages between the ages of 1 and 18 years. Pre-school education is the first level, followed by a single structure of compulsory education and then an upper secondary stage. This is the situation in the Finnish and Icelandic education systems.

In **Finland,** compulsory education, called *peruskoulu* in Finnish and *grundskola* in Swedish, lasts nine years (ages 7 to 16). It also provides an optional year of pre-school education for 6-year-olds and an optional tenth year for those who have completed their compulsory education. Post-compulsory education for pupils aged between 16 and 19 is provided mainly in upper secondary schools and vocational schools.

In **Iceland,** pre-school education is the first stage of the school system and is intended for children who have not yet reached the age of compulsory education (from 1 to 5 years of age). Compulsory education is organised in a single structure, the *grunnskóli*, for pupils from age 6 to 16 years. Post-compulsory education is provided in different types of upper secondary schools. Pupils at this level of education are usually 16 to 20 years of age.

Graph 1 shows the main stages of schooling. Only school structures coming under the Education Ministries are included.

Graph 1: Stages of schooling from ages 1 to 18 years, 1994/95


0 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10 11 12 13 14 15 16 17 18
AT
FI
SE
IS
NO
Pre-school education provided by education authorities
Primary education or single structure
Secondary education
Beginning and end of compulsory education

Source: Eurydice.

2. Pre-school and primary education or single structure (from age 1 to age 12)

In **Austria,** the possibility of attending school is available from the age of 6, on entry to primary school, which ends at age 10. Between the ages of 10 and 12, children attend either a general secondary school or the first stage of an academic secondary school. Children who have attained compulsory school age but have been found not to be ready for formal education may attend a pre-primary class *(Vorschulstufe)* for one year.

In **Finland,** pupils aged 6 to 7 years can attend pre-school education in day-care centres *(päiväkoti/daghem)* or in a pre-school class of the *peruskoulu/grundskola* schools. The latter school has two stages, the first lasting six years, from age 7 to 13 (called *ala-aste/lägstadiet* and the upper stage lasting three years, from age 13 to 16 (called *yläaste/högstadiet*).

In **Sweden,** the compulsory school *(grundskola)* begins at age 6/7 years and ends at 16 years. The previous division of the compulsory school into three different stages was abolished on 30 June 1995. This division of the *grundskola* was organised in three stages: years 1 to 3 (called *lägstadiet*), years 4 to 6 (called *mellanstadiet*) and years 7 to 9 (called *högstadiet*).

In **Iceland,** there are two stages in schooling from age 1 to age 12, pre-school education *(leikskóli)* and the first seven years of compulsory education *(grunnskóli)*. Neither of these stages is subdivided.

In **Norway,** children only start school at the age of 7 *(grunnskole)*. The first stage of compulsory education *(barnetrinnet)* lasts five years, taking children from 7 to 13 years old. This stage is divided into two phases, the first covering the first three years (1 to 3) and the second the next three years (4 to 6). The second stage of complusory education, called *ungdomstrinnet*, lasts four years, taking children from 14 to 16 years old.

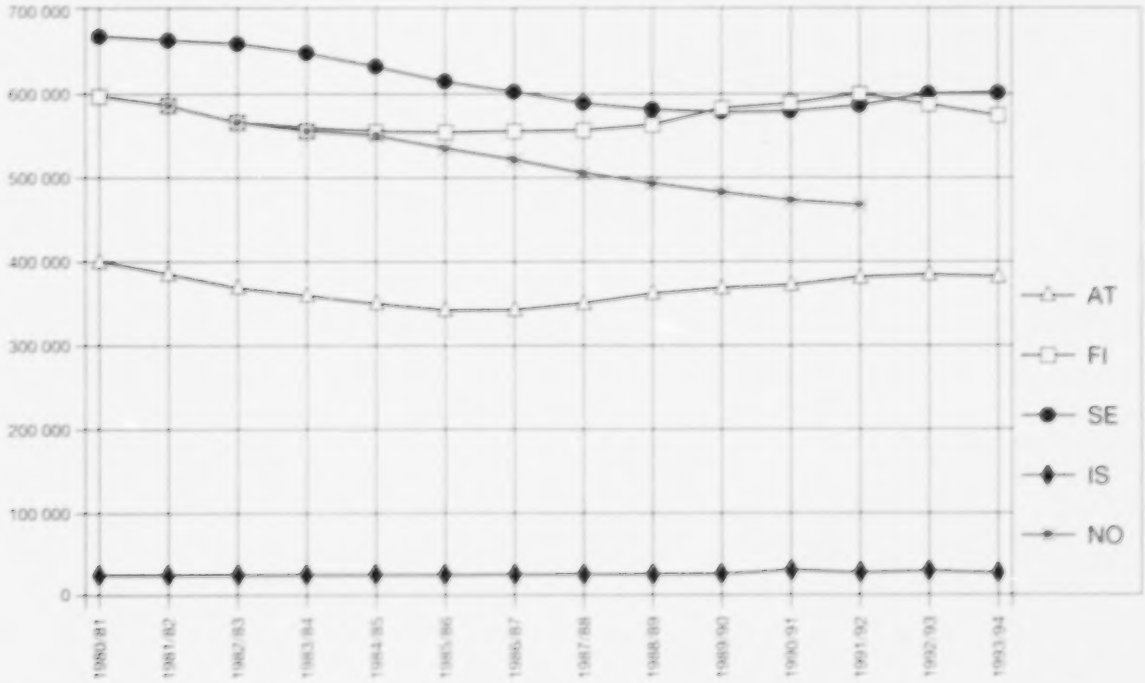
Graph 2: Pre-school and primary or single structure education coming under the education system, 1994/95

Source: Eurydice.

3. Pupils in the public sector

In the five countries dealt with in this supplement, little movement is observed in pupil numbers in primary schools (Austria) or in the first years of compulsory education organised in a single structure (Finland, Sweden, Iceland and Norway) between 1980 and 1994.

Graph 3: Movement in numbers of pupils (thousand) in primary education or the first years of the single structure, 1980/94



Source: Eurydice.

Norway: Data relate to the whole period of compulsory education (age 7 to 16 years).

4. Private education

In these five countries, education is provided by the public sector in the main and there are therefore very few private schools and few pupils in such private institutions.

At the pre-school stage, the highest attendance rate is found in Austria, where more than a quarter of children attend private *Kindergärten*, which are the only education-oriented non-school institutions.

Table 1: Percentage of pupils in private pre-school institutions, whether or not these establishments are grant-aided, 1993/94

	AT	FI	SE	IS	NO
Total private	27%	6%	10%	4%	not available

Sweden: Data relate to 1994/95.

Table 2: Percentage of pupils in private education in primary schools or the lower stage of single structure schools, whether or not these schools are grant-aided, 1993/94

	AT	FI	SE	IS	NO
Total private	4.04%	2%	1.5%	1.8%	1.42%

Sweden: Data relate to all compulsory (*grundskola*) and upper secondary schools and to 1994/95.
Norway: Data relate to the entire period of compulsory education (*grunnskole*).

National data on private education

Austria

The number of private schools is relatively small, with only 4.04% of primary pupils attending them in 1993/94. Most of these schools are run by the churches, especially the Catholic church. Private schools cover the primary and secondary levels. At pre-school level, private *Kindergärten* exist alongside the public-sector establishments.

The legislation on private education distinguishes between two forms of private schools:

- private schools comparable to public-sector schools (teaching according to the national curriculum, but managed by a different body);
- private schools with no comparable public-sector counterpart, i.e. offering a different educational content and managed by a different body from the public sector. *Statutschulen* draw up their own curricula which are subject to the approval of the official education authorities.

The examinations and certificates of private grant-aided schools are recognised as equivalent to those in the public sector.

There are two kinds of grant aid:

- schools run by the churches are entitled to grant aid towards staff costs;
- although the legislation on private education does not make any provision to this effect, private-law contracts are often concluded covering full or partial grant aid towards given projects.

Finland

Only 0.5% of the *peruskoulu/grundskola* schools are private. The general principles of government funding and curricular guidance also apply to private grant-aided schools. The supervision of private day care is the responsibility of the municipalities. In 1993, 6% of the children of pre-school age were in such private centres.

Private schools whose operations are partly financed by the state and which have the right to award diplomas equivalent to those in the municipal *peruskoulu/grundskola* are supervised by the local education authorities. They do not belong to the municipal administration, but in most other aspects they are very similar to municipal schools. Permission to establish a private school is granted by the Council of State *(Valtioneuvosto/Statsrådet)*.

Sweden

In recent years, those providing private education have had new opportunities for operating within the system. The current proportion of private *grundskola* and upper secondary schools is 1.5%. About half of them have a specific educational orientation, such as the Montessori or Rudolf Steiner methods. The others are denominational or have a more general educational approach.

The municipalities are obliged to finance private schools that have been approved by the central authority. The municipality must provide funds per pupil of not less that 75% of the average cost per pupil in the municipal compulsory school.

Iceland

There were 16 privately operated nursery schools in Iceland, attended by a total of 554 children or 4% of the total number of children in 1993/94. These schools are operated by religious denominations, parents or organisations following particular educational theories such as Montessori and Waldorf.

At the *grunnskóli* level, there were six private schools in Iceland with a total of 665 pupils in 1993/94, five of them being in the capital, Reykjavík. Five of them are operated by religious denominations. The schools are attended by pupils of varying ages. Most of them are grant-aided by the state and charge school fees as well. They provide education in accordance with the national curriculum guide and pupils in the tenth year in private schools sit the same standardised examinations as pupils of the same age in the publicly operated *grunnskólar*. Parental choice of school is in fact limited.

Norway

Only 5% of the *grunnskole* are private. They have mainly been considered as supplementary to, and not in competition with, public education. Private schools at the *grunnskole* level include religious schools and schools with a particular educational orientation. All private schools have the right to receive government grants and also to charge school fees.

5. Initial training of teachers

Only Finland and Sweden have opted for university training for teachers for the pre-school level. On the other hand, Austria, Iceland and Norway train their future teachers in non-university higher education institutions or in specialised branches of upper secondary level education. However, the length of period of initial teacher training is the same in all these countries (three years) except in Austria, where teachers can take two- or five-year training courses.

Initial training of primary or single structure school teachers is at university level in all of these countries, except for teachers in the *Vorschulstufe* (pre-primary class) and the *Volksschule* in Austria. The length of training varies from country to country and is between three and four-and-a-half years.

National data on teacher training for the pre-school stage

Austria

The seventh amendment to the 1982 law on school organisation lays the legal foundations for the training of *Kindergarten* teachers in its current form. Training starts in year 9 (upper secondary education), the course lasts for five years (ages 15 to 19) and ends with both the "matriculation examination" *(Matura)* and a professional qualification. Those who pass are entitled to enter university.

Since 1994/95, a four-semester course of pre-school teacher training is also offered in colleges. To enter these colleges, candidates must have either completed upper secondary school (secondary level II) successfully and passed the *Matura*, or they must pass an examination which entitles them to enter university *(Studienberechtigungsprüfung)*.

Finland

Since 1 August 1995, teacher training for pre-school education is given in the universities (Faculties of Educational Sciences). Before this date, teacher training was organised in the pre-school teacher colleges (specialised institutions of higher vocational education).

Sweden

Initial training takes the form of university courses. Courses have been extended from two-and-a-half to three years with effect from the beginning of the academic year 1993/94. This period includes one-and-a-half years of professional training and practice.

Iceland

Pre-school teacher training takes three years of study. Formally, this is at upper secondary level, but in practice it is at higher education level, as the admission requirements are a university entrance certificate (*stúdentspróf*) or an equivalent qualification.

Norway

To enter a course of training for pre-school teaching, it is necessary to hold a certificate of upper secondary education.

National data on training for teaching in primary or single structure schools

Austria

Primary school teachers are trained in teacher training institutes (*Pädagogische Akademien*) which are non-university higher education institutes.

As minimum entrance requirements, candidates must either have completed upper secondary studies successfully (matriculation examination) or pass the special examination which entitles them to enrol in university studies (*Studienberechtigungsprüfung*).

Primary school teacher training takes three years.

Finland

Teachers are trained at universities. The training programme for teachers of years 1 to 6 of the *peruskoulu/grundskola* consists of 160 credits (four years) and leads to an academic degree, its main subject being the science and principles of education. A subject teacher for years 7 to 9 must have an academic degree in the subject from the appropriate faculty. A subject teacher's training must include studies in education and a period of practical teacher training.

Sweden

To qualify as a teacher, it is necessary to have completed a Swedish teacher training programme or to have the equivalent certification from another Member State of the EU or an EFTA/EEA country. Unqualified teachers may be employed for a certain length of time if qualified staff are unobtainable.

Teachers in the *grundskola* are trained at universities and university colleges. The majority of teachers of general subjects now in service have been trained in separate integrated training programmes of two-and-a-half years of study, for years 1 to 3, and three years of study, for years 4 to 6, whilst subject teachers for years 7 to 9 have a university or college degree and also a diploma awarded on completion of a one-year course in the theory and practice of teaching.

A new integrated programme was introduced in 1988/89.

Iceland

Teacher training for *grunnskóli* lasts three years at university level. Admission requirements are the university entrance certificate (*stúdentspróf*) or comparable education.

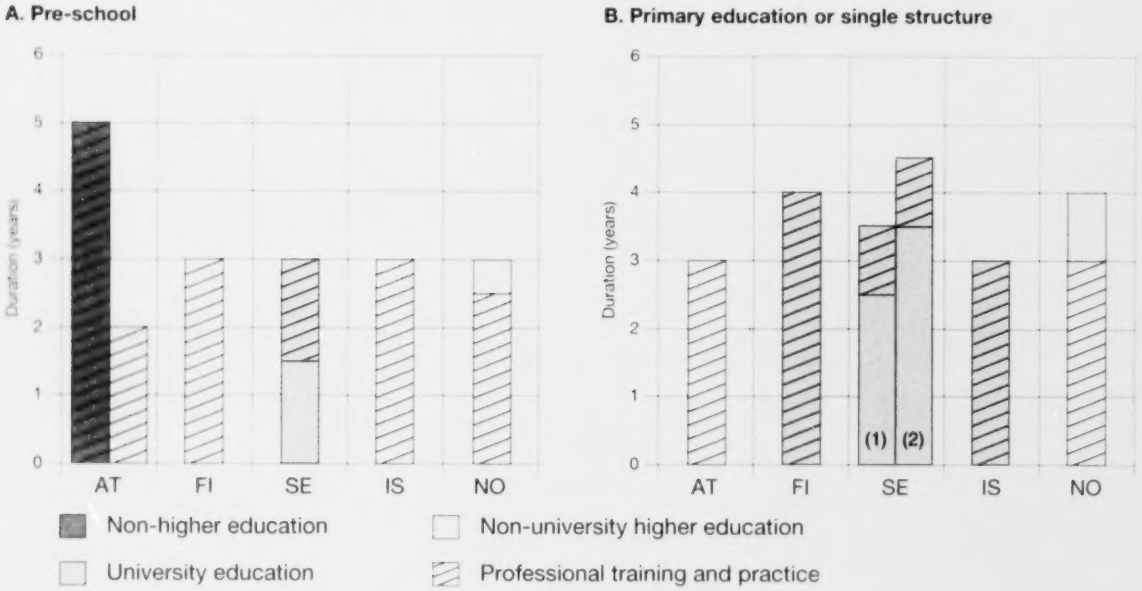
Two universities offer courses in education which qualify teachers to teach at the compulsory (and upper secondary) level. This course of study requires 30 credits in education in addition to a BA or BSc degree (vocational or university training).

The training for physical education teachers lasts two years. Formally, this training is offered at upper secondary level, but in practice it is at higher educational level.

Norway

Students applying for teacher training at the *grunnskole* level must hold at least a certificate of completion of upper secondary studies. Training of these future teachers is at non-university higher education level. Courses of study may vary in length but cannot exceed four years.

Graph 4: Initial teacher training, 1994/95



Source: Eurydice.

Finland: Since 1 August 1995, the initial training of nursery teachers is given in universities. The length of study is three years. The information concerning the initial teacher training of the single structure (graph 4.B) relates to class teachers in the first six years of the *peruskoulu/grundskola*.

Sweden: (1) refers to teachers in years 1 to 7 in *grundskola*; (2) refers to teachers in years 4 to 9 in *grundskola*. The duration of the university course varies from three-and-a-half to four-and-a-half years depending on the student's choice of subjects.

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Chapter II

PROVISION FOR PUPILS IN PRIMARY OR SINGLE STRUCTURE SCHOOLS DURING OUT-OF-SCHOOL HOURS

1. Social context

When both parents work outside the home, they require both a place where their young children can be taken care of during school holidays and an extension of day care for them outside school hours. Demand is on the increase, due to an increase in the number of women in employment and a breakdown in traditional family structures. Often, young parents can no longer count on the resources of an extended family. For single-parent families, the problem can be even more acute.

Table 3: Percentage of mothers raising a child under the age of 7 who are in employment

AT	FI	SE	IS	NO
52% (1988)	78% (1989) 73% (1993)	80% (1992)	76% (1993)	70% (1993)

Austria and **Iceland:** Figures apply to gainfully employed mothers raising a child under the age of 6.

Table 4: The social context which has led to the organisation of out-of-school-hours provision for children

	AT	FI	SE	IS	NO
Both parents work	*	*	*	*	*
Education policy	*				

National data on social context

Austria

Changing family and employment structures and a significant rise in female employment are the factors which have contributed to full-day provision of care and supervision for school children.

Finland

Women's participation in the labour force has traditionally been high in Finland. In about two thirds of the families with children in the first stage of compulsory education, both parents work.

Schools can provide some leisure activities after school hours, but for the most part provision is the responsibility of the municipal day-care system. In recent years, the public funds available for those services have decreased due to the recession. At the same time, demand for out-of-school-hours provision has also decreased as a consequence of an unprecedented rate of unemployment among parents.

The legislation enables one of the parents to stay at home until the child is 3 years old, and then return to work. There is also a guaranteed legal right to take partial leave from work until the child reaches school age. In this case, working time is six hours a day or 30 hours a week.

Sweden

In recent decades, it has become usual for most women to retain their jobs after having a baby, and they are legally entitled to do so. This system results in Swedish families with children having special needs. One is for a parental insurance system to enable parents to stay at home to look after babies, and children when they are ill, without suffering financial hardship. Another is for high-quality care for young children when their parents are at work. A system of public child care has therefore been developed in Sweden which aims to enable parents to combine parenthood with professional work or studies as well as to meet children's need for support and development.

Iceland

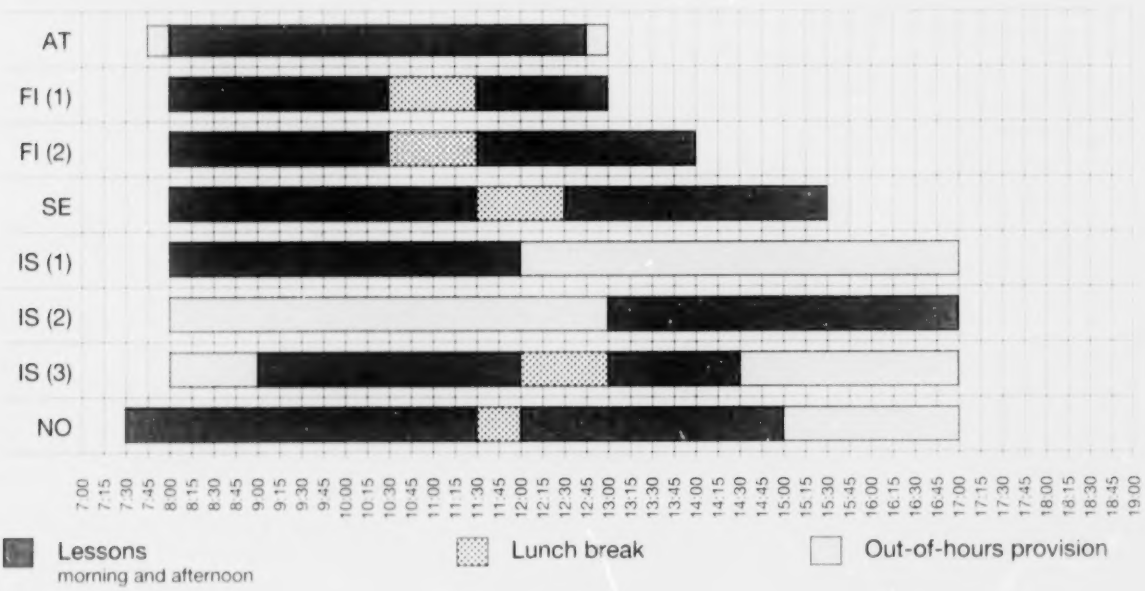
It has recently become increasingly more common to find families in which both parents are employed outside the home and single-parent families. Despite this, the school system has until very recently been relatively unresponsive, provision being made following increased pressure from parents. Many local authorities have attempted to meet these needs by extending the time spent at school outside class time with extra-curricular recreational activities. The extra time may be added before or after school hours. The organisation of such services is often complicated because of the lack of school facilities and the double shifts operated in schools in urban areas. Individual local authorities have hitherto offered out-of-hours provision on a voluntary basis.

Norway

A main concern in the first stage of *grunnskole* at present is the organisation of after-school care and extra-curricular activities for pupils in years 1 to 3. Six-year-old pupils now participate in a pre-school programme in the public schools. *Skolefritidsordninger* (SFO) were first created to respond to parents' need for a system providing for their youngest children. The central education authorities have developed models and issued information and guidance on matters of organisation, and they undertake evaluation. The after-school programme is the responsibility of the municipal authorities.

2. Opening of schools outside teaching hours

Graph 5: Opening hours of primary and single structure schools, 1994/95



Source: Eurydice.

Finland: (1) years 1 to 6 of the *peruskoulu/grundskola;* (2) years 7 to 9 of the *peruskoulu/grundskola.* (The schools can decide on the placing of the lunch break, which is at least 30 minutes.)

Iceland: (1) and (2) two-shift system; (3) single system. Out-of-hours provision in some schools only.

3. Authorities responsible for timetabling

In these five countries, decisions on the hours of opening and closing schools can be taken at Ministry level and/or at the local level. In the majority of these countries, schools can determine pupils' timetables. In Austria alone, however, parents can also influence timetabling.

Table 5: Levels of decision-making about weekly teaching timetables and school opening hours

	AT	FI	SE	IS	NO
Ministry	Federal Ministry of Education	Ministry of Education		Ministry of Education	Ministry of Education
Local authority	Federal education authorities in the *Länder*	Municipality	Municipality	Municipality	Municipality
Schools	*	*	*	*	*
Parents	*				

National data on the levels at which decisions are made on timetables

Austria

The Federal Ministry of Education and Cultural Affairs sets the weekly teaching timetable. The schools may opt for a five-day or a six-day week.

The Federal Ministry of Education and Cultural Affairs issues basic laws on opening and teaching hours in schools; detailed implementing provisions are issued by the federal education authorities in the Länder *(Landesschulräte)*.

The schools and parents can also influence timetabling.

Finland

The law on the *peruskoulu/grundskola* lays down the number of school days in the year and the minimum and maximum numbers of class hours per week, and the national timetable, approved by the government, specifies the minimum number of courses in the *peruskoulu/grundskola* for each subject. The municipalities can arrange the timetable of their schools within this framework. The schools themselves set their own timetables, allocating the class hours for each subject, each class and each day of the school week.

Sweden

The education legislation *(Skollagen)* lays down a maximum number of school days in the year. The municipalities and the schools are then free to organise the weekly timetabling.

Iceland

The law on compulsory education *(Grunnskólalög)* determines the minimum annual hours of teaching for each year. The Ministry of Culture and Education subsequently issues a guideline academic calendar, stipulating the minimum number of hours of teaching weekly in each subject for each year. The Ministry of Culture and Education may, however, alter the minimum hours of teaching depending on the financial situation in each instance. Local authorities may in some cases add to the minimum hours of teaching. Each school determines the weekly timetables of its pupils and individual classes.

Norway

The curriculum guidelines *(Monsterplanen)* lay down a minimum of class hours per week for each stage. The number of hours can vary within limits from school to school and from authority to authority.

4. Activities organised outside school hours

In the four Nordic countries, extra-curricular provision is made for pupils outside school hours. These services are frequently under the responsibility of the local authorities and are organised in leisure or day-care centres. In Austria, schools make only lunchtime and study provision for pupils.

National data on activities organised outside class time

Austria

Out-of-hours supervision is of three types, study time for particular curriculum subjects, individual study time, and recreation (including mealtimes).

Finland

Pupils in *peruskoulu/grundskola* are provided with a free lunch at school every day. The lunch is supervised by the teachers. If pupils have to wait for transport after school, supervised activities such as homework classes are offered. In some special situations, school work can be extended beyond normal school hours, for example with field trips and visits to the theatre.

In some municipalities, there are leisure time activities for school children in the afternoons, organised within the day-care system and by the day-care staff. There is also family day care for young school-children.

Sweden

In most schools, pupils receive a midday meal in school.

Provision is made by the municipality for older children with working parents. Leisure time centres *(fritidshem)* are for school-children aged between 6/7 and 12 years and they are open before and after school as well as during the school holidays. Two members of staff, often recreation instructors *(fritidspedagoger)* and child care attendants, usually work with groups of 15 to 20 children.

There is also family day care *(familjedaghem)*, under which the municipality employs family childminders *(dagbarnvårdare)* to care for children aged between 1 and 12 years in the minder's own home. The National Board of Health and Welfare has drawn up general guidelines for family day care work.

Iceland

Children frequently attend school either in the morning or in the afternoon. Their school day varies in length and the number of school days each year is relatively low.

In urban areas, the two-shift system common in many schools has often hindered the development of out-of-hours provision. It is therefore now considered important to implement either single shifts in all schools, accompanied by out-of-hours provision, or full-day schools. New legislation on the *grunnskóli* provides for all schools in Iceland to operate on a single shift system by the year 2001 and for pupils to be given the possibility of meals at lunchtime, in addition to granting the schools formal permission to organise out-of-hours provision every day.

Norway

Provision for children before and after class hours is made in institutions called *Skolefritidsordninger* (SFO), open from about 7.30 a.m. to 4.30 p.m. Most of the SFO are organised in close cooperation with the schools. They are intended primarily for children in years 1 to 3 and also for six-year-old children. The SFO are usually located in the school buildings or nearby.

5. Responsibility for organising provision out of school hours and standards of staffing

In general, local authorities are responsible for the organisation of out-of-school-hours services. In most of these countries, all groups asociated with the schools can also be consulted before decisions are taken. Parents have less responsibility in this matter.

No one of these five countries has official standards for the supervision of activities outside school hours.

Table 6: Levels of decision-making about organisation of provision

	AT	FI	SE	IS	NO
Ministry	Federal Ministry of Education				
Local authority	Federal education authorities in the *Länder*	Municipality	Municipality	Local authority	Municipality
School	*	*	*		*
Parents	*				
Others	*				

National data on levels of decision-making for the organisation of activities outside school hours and standards of supervision

Austria

Responsibility for the adoption of full-day types of schooling lies with the federal education authorities in the *Länder (Landesschulräte)*. Groups connected with the schools must be consulted before decisions are taken.

Day-care centres may be organised by public or private-sector institutions.

There are no official standards of supervision for children's after-school care.

Finland

Organising activities out of school hours is optional for the municipality and schools. There may be some, the schools deciding to what extent they arrange these activities. Leisure time activities organised inside the day-care system are supervised by the municipalities according to the same principles as the other forms of day care.

There are no official standards for supervision of out-of-hours activities.

Sweden

The municipalities are responsible for organising provision out of school hours. This is usually done in cooperation with the schools according to an educational programme set by the National Board of Health and Welfare.

There are no official standards for supervision of out-of-hours activities.

Iceland

Local authorities are exclusively responsible for the organisation and scope of this service. There are no official requirements concerning the education and training of personnel supervising out-of-hours activities in schools. Development in this area is progressing rapidly and demands for improvement in the quality of the services offered are already being advanced.

There are no official standards of supervision of out-of-hours activities.

Norway

The municipalities are responsible for organising SFO. This is done in cooperation with the parents and the schools.

There are no official standards for the supervision of children in after-school care. At present, allocation of teachers is on the basis of one teacher for approximately 16 to 18 children.

6. Financing the services

In general, parents have to contribute on the financing of out-of-hours provision for their children. In most cases, this parental help does not cover the full cost and the public authorities (Ministry of Education or local authorities) add their financial support.

Table 7: Source of financing of provision outside school hours

	AT	FI	SE	IS	NO
Ministry of Education	Federal Ministry of Education				Ministry of Education
Local authority	Federal education authorities in the *Länder*	Municipality	Municipality	Local authority	Municipality
Parents pay	Yes	Yes, in some cases	Yes	Yes, in most cases	Yes
Others	Yes	Yes			

National data on the financing of services outside school hours and whether or not they are free

Austria

Schools with out-of-hours provision and day-care centres are mostly financed by the federal government, the *Länder* or the municipalities. Parents may be asked to make contributions of varying amounts, which are means-tested.

Finland

The government provides funds for the municipalities based on national financing guidelines. The municipalities can decide independently how to use the funds and they may finance extra-curricular activities. It is also possible for a municipality to allow the schools themselves to decide how to use their funds.

The municipalities can decide, if they want, to collect payments for snacks or materials that are provided for day centres and family day care.

The law on the *peruskoulu/grundskola* guarantees every pupil an adequate and well organised and supervised meal free of charge every school day.

Sweden

Parents pay fees for each child attending a leisure time centre or family day care. Different municipalities charge different fees. These are normally income-related and take into consideration the number of children in the family who are attending child care services.

Iceland

The local authority finances these services. In most cases, parents must pay for the services but the amounts payable by parents vary from one locality to another. The parents' financial contribution does not cover the full cost. In a few localities these services are free.

Norway

The municipalities are responsible for financing SFO. The Ministry of Education, Research and Church Affairs provides some support. Parents must pay for the service, but the amounts vary from municipality to municipality. The parents' contribution does not cover the full cost – in principle about 30%, in reality about 50%.

7. Staff providing supervision

The majority of the staff involved in the supervision of out-school-hours provision consists of teachers and other staff with or without educational qualifications. In Sweden, child minders with special training can also be engaged in extra-curricular activities.

Table 8: Qualifications of staff providing supervision

	AT	FI	SE	IS	NO
School staff	*	*		*	*
Parents					
Others qualified	*	*	*	*	*
Others unqualified	*		*	*	*

National data on staff providing supervision

Austria

Out-of-school-hours activities can be supervised by teachers during subject study time and by teachers or education staff during individual study or recreation time.

In day-care centres, children are supervised by education staff and teaching auxiliaries.

Finland

There is no legislation on the competence of staff involved in extra-curricular activities, but the school staff usually supervise provision outside school hours.

In schools, the staff working with children outside school hours consists mainly of qualified teachers. In day-care centres (*päiväkoti/daghem*), children are supervised by qualified education staff.

Sweden

Recreation instructors and child care attendants work in leisure time centres. The training for recreation instructors takes the form of university courses. These programmes have been extended from two-and-a-half to three years with effect from 1993/94. Child care attendants are trained in special three-year programmes in upper secondary school. There are also special courses such as those for bilingual persons wanting to work primarily with immigrant children.

Almost half (41%) of the family childminders in family day care have taken an introductory course of 90 to 100 hours, or a longer training, for example the child attendant's course.

Iceland

The supervisory staff may consist of teachers, instructors with some educational qualifications or individuals with no educational qualifications who are recruited especially for this purpose.

Norway

In SFO, more than 50% of the staff hold a teaching qualification, for example, the certificate required to teach at the *grunnskole* and/or pre-school level.

8. Arrangements for pupils outside school hours in private schools

There is as a rule little difference between the public and private sectors except in Iceland, where private establishments appear to have an advantage in organising services as they receive fees.

National data on arrangements for pupils out of school hours in private schools

Austria

Arrangements for pupils outside school hours exist in the private sector as well as in the public sector.

Finland

Private schools may have extra-curricular activities, but they do not differ from those of the public schools, except that the parents may participate in their financing.

Sweden

The arrangements for pupils outside school hours in private schools do not differ from those in the public schools.

Iceland

Private schools receive support from the government and receive school fees from parents as well. As a result, they are in a better position than other schools to provide out-of-hours supervision by teachers. Out-of-hours provision takes various forms.

Norway

Arrangements for after-school care for pupils in private schools differ little from the arrangements in public schools. Activities are often organised and run by the parents, and are financially supported by the municipalities.

National data on the use of services out of school hours

Austria

So far, only a small proportion of primary school children have attended schools offering out-of-hours provision. These services have been established on an experimental basis. Under the provisions of a new law, all-day schools may be run within the framework of the mainstream school system from the school year 1994/95 onwards, starting in the first year and continuing to the next higher classes.

Slightly more than 6% of all primary school children spend their afternoons at day-care centres (1991: 6.07%; 1992: 6.32%; 1993: 6.47%).

Finland, Sweden

There are no statistics available.

Iceland

Some schools, especially in the urban areas, offer their pupils out-of-hours provision. This service has primarily been offered to the youngest pupils. Some 21% of children 6 to 9 years old are using this service in 1995/96.

Norway

In 1993, about 80% of the municipalities provided SFO for children in years 1 to 3.

Approximately 30% of pupils were enrolled in SFO.

PART II: THE EDUCATION PROCESS

Chapter I

PRE-SCHOOL EDUCATION

1. Forms of provision and supervision

Pre-school education in **Austria** does not form part of the education system. It is optional and children attend on their parents' initiative.

Pre-school care for children under the age of compulsory education is offered in public crèches *(Krippen)*, day nurseries and infant day-care centres (children under the age of 3), and in *Kindergarten* establishments (from the age of 3 until school entry). Many children spend their pre-school years at home with their families, or are left with a childminder.

Under the Austrian Constitution, the enactment and implementation of *Kindergarten* laws are the responsibility of the *Länder*, i.e. questions relating to the different types of institutions and their functions, internal and external organisation, supervisory functions or staffing matters are decided individually by the nine *Länder*. *Kindergarten* admission will be granted at the parent's request within the limits of capacity. The *Kindergarten* generally charges a fee.

Private *Kindergärten* may by operated by bodies such as churches and religious communities, health insurance funds, companies or private bodies, provided the necessary requirements are complied with.

Play groups *(Kindergruppen)* set up following private initiatives are an alternative to the public and private-sector *Kindergärten*. Most such groups are organised by parents, and parents are often prepared to take an active part in the groups' activities.

The pre-primary year at school *(Vorschulstufe)* is intended for children who have attained the age of compulsory education but are not yet mature enough to attend primary school proper. However, the pre-primary year is part of the school system; its aim is preparation for the school routine. At the request of their parents, children who have not yet attained compulsory school age and whose premature admission to the first year was refused may attend the pre-primary year on an optional basis. The pre-primary stage operates as pre-primary classes (10 to 20 pupils) or pre-primary groups (less than 10).

Children's day care in **Finland** takes the following forms:

- **Day-care centres** *(päiväkoti/daghem)* are institutions organising day care for children between 0 and 6 years of age, giving pre-school education to six-year-olds and providing afternoon care for children coming from school. A day-care centre or one of its sections can also function as a special day centre for children with special educational needs.

  They are run under the Ministry of Social Affairs and Health, and do not belong to the education system. Parents pay fees.
- **Family day care** *(perhepäivähoito/familjedagvård)* is provided by the municipality employing a family childminder who works in her own home or in another private home. She takes care of at the most four children, including her own children below school age. In addition to these four children, the day-care minder may provide part-time day care for one child who is attending pre-school education or has started school.

  In the official statistics, six-year-olds in family day care are not counted as children receiving pre-school education. Only those in day-care centres and in pre-school education in schools are counted.
- **Play activities** *(leikkitoiminta/lekaktiviteter)* can take place in playgrounds, in playgroups or in "open pre-school centres" *(avoin päiväkoti/öppen förskola)*. The activities outside school hours come mainly under this form of day care. Access to these activities is usually not limited.

Pre-school education is also provided in some schools, *(peruskoulu/grundskola)*, in which case it come under the administration of the Ministry of Education. Pre-school education in schools takes place in separate pre-school classes or in "combined classes" which include pupils of years 1 and 2.

Pre-school education in schools is free of charge.

Pre-school education in **Sweden** does not form part of the education system. Pre-school institutions belong to the public child care sector and are regulated under the Social Services Act of 1980. The aims and scope of public child care are decided on by Parliament, whereas the Ministry of Health and Social Affairs is responsible for the preparation of laws and proposals related to child care. The National Board of Health and Welfare and the county councils are together responsible for supervising the pre-school provision and other forms of child care nation-wide. The authorities for the pre-school sector are the municipalities.

Child care services take the following forms:

- **Day-care centres** *(daghem)* are for children aged 1 to 6 years whose parents are gainfully employed or studying. Day-care centres are usually open Monday to Friday, all year round. Children are usually divided into mixed-age groups. These groups are made up of small children up to the age of 3 years, sibling groups (usually 3 to 6 years), or extended sibling groups which can include children of all pre-school ages as well as younger school-children. The average day-care centre has four groups or sections, each with some 15 to 18 children.
- **Part-time groups** *(deltidsgrupper)* cater for children aged 4 to 6. These groups function during the school year and meet for three hours daily, morning or afternoon.
- **Open pre-school centres** *(öppen förskola)* are targeted at pre-school children without any other kind of pre-school place. The children attend a few times a week in the company of a parent or family childminder.

The term *förskola* is used to denote day-care services, part-time groups and open pre-school centres.

Public child care is jointly financed by the municipal budget and fees paid by parents. Only pre-school provision for 6-year-olds is free of charge to parents.

Pre-school centres in **Iceland** operate under legislation on pre-school education and the education programme for such schools issued by the Ministry of Culture and Education. Legislation provides for local authorities to finance the construction and operation of pre-school units and to supervise their operation. They are responsible for establishing and operating pre-school provision and ensuring that children are offered pre-school services.

According to the legislation, all children under compulsory school age must have the opportunity of attending pre-school facilities if their parents so desire. Children with disabilities and children from single parent families have priority for pre-school services in many locations where the facilities are insufficient to meet demand. Despite the fact that legislation prescribes that all children under compulsory school age are to be provided with the opportunity of attending pre-school education, in actual fact in many areas there is a considerable shortage of pre-school facilities, especially for children under the age of 3 years. Many parents with young children thus seek other day-care solutions during their working hours, e.g. with childminders in private homes.

All parents pay fees for their children to attend pre-school education; the local authorities determine the amount. Parental contributions generally cover roughly 25 to 30% of the operating costs of each centre.

Pre-school institutions in **Norway** do not form part of the education system. They are generally referred to as child-care institutions *(barnehager)*. Responsibility for them rests with the Ministry of Health and Social Affairs. Attendance is not compulsory and there are no formal entrance requirements. Any limitations are linked to capacity and costs.

Parents normally have to contribute financially, the amount they pay varying from institution to institution and from one municipality to another. Parents on low incomes or whose child has a physical handicap may apply for a free place, the cost being met by the municipality.

Provision for child-care services is the responsibility of the municipality.

2. Role and objectives of pre-school education

Pre-school education has a dual function in all these five countries: it contributes to the education of children of pre-school age and it also provides care during parents' working hours. Nevertheless, differences exist in the manner of implementation of pre-school education from country to country.

In **Austria,** crèches *(Krippen)* and *Kindergärten* aim at complementing and supporting education within the family unit. Play groups *(Kindergruppen)* provide care, supervision and educational stimulus, and aim to promote individual development, to impart fundamental religious and ethical values, and to prepare the child for school life through appropriate measures and social interaction in a peer group. There is no binding national curriculum defining educational objectives in the *Kindergarten*, the general educational programme describing the aims of *Kindergarten* education as follows: emotional education, social behaviour, values, sex education, religious education, creativity, cognitive development, speech, physical education, learning and performance orientation, and social competence.

In contrast to the *Kindergarten*, the pre-primary class *(Vorschulstufe)* is considered in education legislation as part of the primary school. According to the Austrian School Organisation Act, primary school, in fact the entire system of education, is to contribute to developing children's ethical, religious and social values of what is true, good and beautiful through different forms of teaching which are geared to their individual stages of development and educational backgrounds.

Under the Austrian School Organisation Act, the pre-primary year is intended to prepare for school life those children who have already attained compulsory school age (i.e. age 6) in that calendar year but who lack maturity for school attendance, and children whose early admission to the first year has later been revoked.

Teachers in pre-primary classes will attach particular importance to making use of, and creating, situations in which learning comes naturally to children, and to organising learning processes. The educational principles are: respect for the child's individual stage of development and educational background; recognition of the child's entire personality; social learning; learning by adventure and by illustration; play and action-oriented learning; learning from experiences outside pre-defined settings and gradual systematisation and reinforcement of learning experiences.

In **Finland** it is considered important to develop the child's individual possibilities and to see the child as an active learner.

The aim of day care and pre-school education is to support parents in their task of bringing up their children and to promote together with the family the well-balanced development of the child's personality. Day care must offer the child continuous, secure and warm human relations. Taking into account cultural factors and the child's age and individual needs, day care should advance the child's physical, social and emotional development and also support the child's aesthetic, intellectual and religious upbringing.

In **Sweden,** the aim of public child care is that it should be available to all children whose parents wish it. Since 1975, all children aged 6 and over, as well as handicapped children from the age of 4, have been eligible for pre-school education for a minimum of one year. This opportunity is optional for the child, but mandatory for the municipal authorities. In 1995, a child-care guarantee was incorporated in the social services legislation, obliging all municipalities to provide child care for all children between the ages of 1 and 12 years who require it, either because the parents are working or studying or because of the child's own needs.

The work in pre-school institutions covers the following main areas: cultural activities such as language, drama, music and art, painting and pottery, nature study and community life. These topics manifest themselves through play, creative activities, daily tasks, etc. There are also daily outdoor activities throughout the year. Pre-school education does not convey school education per se, but it should provide preparatory training for school.

The aims and responsibilities of the pre-school and after-school centres have been set out in educational programmes issued by the National Board of Health and Welfare. Together with the parents, the pre-school institution has the tasks of preparing the child for, and integrating it into, society. The schools' activities, which should be planned in close cooperation with the parents, should be based largely on the children's real-life situations, their interests, previous experiences and special needs.

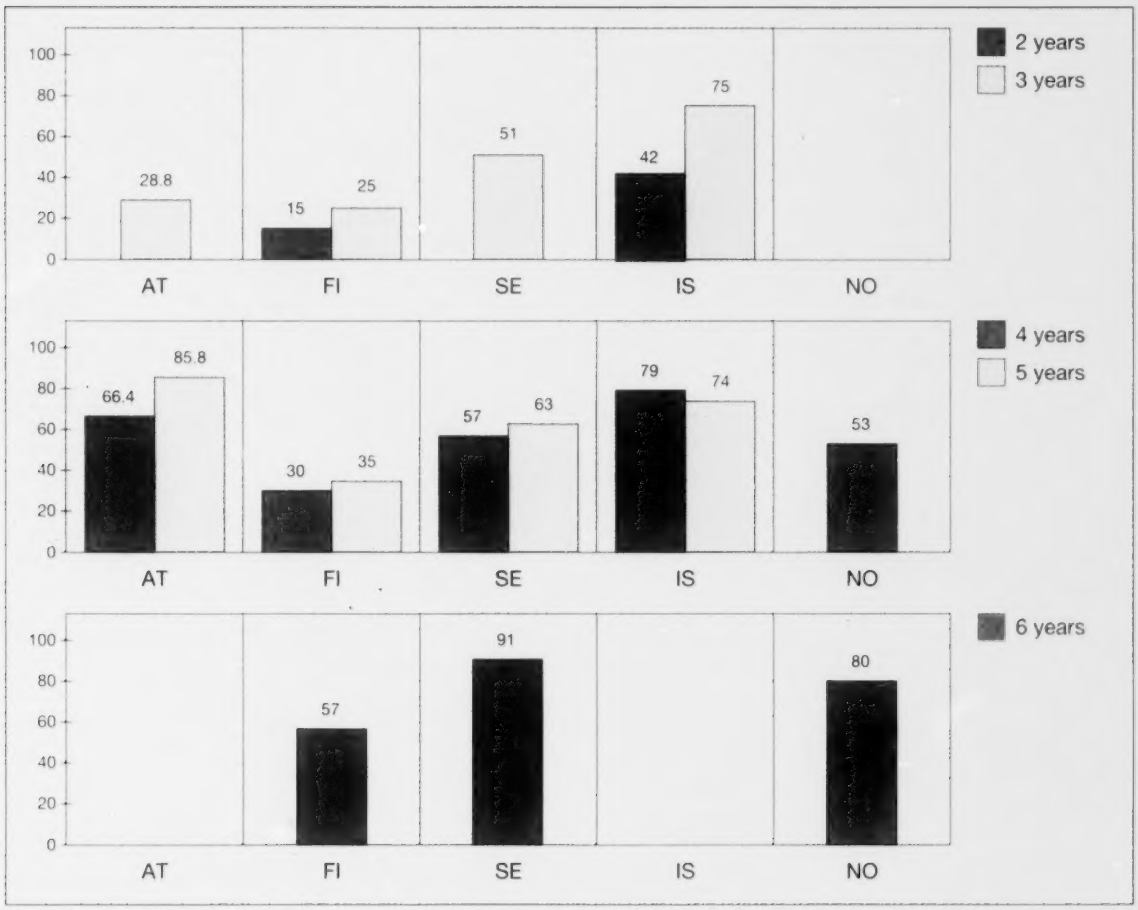
In **Iceland**, the educational focus at the pre-school stage is on play. In cooperation with the parents, pre-school establishments are required to make every effort to support the all-round development of children and to seek to provide them with the physical and psychological conditions to enjoy their childhood, while at the same time laying the foundations for their independent, conscious, active and responsible participation in society.

Pre-school education is intended to bridge the gap between caring for children and educating them, supporting their all-round development and thus preparing them for *grunnskóli* and life itself.

In **Norway**, child care institutions contribute to the education of children of pre-school age, and provide care when both parents work. A national plan stating the general aims of the pre-school stage will be implemented in the near future.

3. Statistics on pre-school attendance – age 2 to age 6

Graph 6: Rates of attendance at pre-school establishments, 1993



Source: Eurydice.

Austria and **Iceland:** This is not relevant. At 6 years old, children are in compulsory education. In Austria, some 6-year-olds are in the *Vorschulstufe*.

4. Decisions and issues regarding the transition from pre-school education to primary or single structure school

Compulsory education in **Austria** starts on 1 September following the child's sixth birthday. Prior to granting admission to the first year, the headmaster will determine whether the child is ready for school. During a brief interview, children are asked for their name and address, they are expected to count a number of objects and to recognise different colours. Children are considered mature enough for entry to school if there is a reasonable prospect that they will be able to follow the first year course of education without being overtaxed. A child considered not ready for school may attend the pre-primary class *(Vorschulstufe)* to develop the necessary aptitude under appropriate educational and methodological guidance.

Given their delicate psychological and social situation, children at the pre-school level need a gradual transition from free play to new activities, where periods of teaching are timed to match their individual levels of concentration and are interspersed with sufficient breaks. Small-group activities are a highly effective means of stimulation and motivation and allow the teacher to concentrate on the individual pupil's needs.

Close interaction between parents and teachers is indispensable if the targets of pre-school attendance are to be reached. Similarly, frequent consultation between teachers and other establishments (i.e. *Kindergarten* on the one hand, and the first year of primary school on the other) will have a positive influence on the progress of the individual child at the pre-school level. School doctors, the school psychological service and speech therapists may also provide valuable assistance.

The fifteenth amendment to the Austrian legislation on school organisation allows for school experiments to be carried out in the transition phase. By forming integrated pre-school and primary classes, these try to offer flexible, demand-oriented and regionally adjusted educational arrangements for the start of schooling, in which the children's individual needs can be catered for.

In **Finland**, compulsory education begins at the beginning of the Autumn term of the year in which the child's seventh birthday falls. Cooperation between pre-school education (day care) and the school is seen as important. At the moment, cooperation in the preparation of the curriculum is also stressed. Pre-school teachers and teachers at the compulsory level cooperate, for example by visiting each other and exchanging information.

In **Sweden**, the start of schooling is important, and many different ways are therefore being tried to facilitate the transition between the pre-school and school levels. Pre-school teachers and junior level teachers cooperate in various ways. Pre-school children can visit schools and school-children can assist in the work of pre-school institutions. Sometimes both levels of education are accommodated under the same roof, in which case mixed-age-group teaching is feasible.

In **Iceland**, compulsory education begins on 1 September of the calendar year in which the child's sixth birthday falls, and *grunnskólar* accept all children. As the school programme during the first years of *grunnskóli* and the final period of pre-school education operate on a similar basis, there is usually no problem with the transfer between these school levels.

In **Norway**, *grunnskole* normally takes children between the ages of 7 and 16, but an increasing number of children are starting school at age 6. Problems of transition do not arise during this period.

Chapter II
PRIMARY OR SINGLE STRUCTURE EDUCATION

A Education Programmes and their Content

1. Responsibility for developing education programmes

In all these countries, the first level of responsibility for developing education programmes is the Ministerial level. Local authorities, however, have significant powers to ensure that educational activities follow the government guidelines.

On the other hand, schools are also involved in the development of educational objectives in Austria, Finland and Sweden.

2. Levels of decision-making for different aspects of the education programmes

List of subjects

In most of these five countries, subjects are presented individually and not grouped in subject areas, except in Finland, where biology, geography, environmental studies and civics are grouped together in a subject area called "Environment and nature study", and in Austria, where history, local geography and biology are grouped together as "*Sachunterricht*".

The list of subjects areas is laid down centrally. In Austria the authority concerned is the Federal Ministry of Education.

Table 9: Number of compulsory activities at the start of schooling

	AT	FI	SE	IS	NO
COMPULSORY SUBJECTS	Religion	Religion or Ethics	Optional (usually around 6 subjects)	Religion	Religion
	Local Geography, History and Biology *(Sachunterricht)*	History, Environment and Nature Study		Social Studies Natural Sciences	Civics
	German	Finnish/Swedish (mother tongue)		Icelandic	Norwegian
		Foreign language (the other native language, English, French, German or Russian) and optional foreign language			English
	Mathematics	Mathematics		Mathematics	Mathematics
	Music	Music		Music	Music
	Art	Arts and Crafts		Arts and Crafts	Arts and Crafts
	Handicraft and textile design				
	Physical Education	Physical Education		Physical Education	Physical Education

Timetabling of subjects

The distribution of teaching hours to each subject is decided at national level, but local authorities and even schools can organise the timetabling according to their own circumstances.

Frequently, curricula indicate only the minimum or maximum number of teaching hours to be devoted to each subject in terms of weekly lessons, or hours over the entire year, or over the whole period of the compulsory school (Sweden, Iceland and Norway). In Finland, the national framework curriculum indicates the minimum number of teaching hours in each compulsory subject over the six-year period of the lower stage of the *peruskoulu/grundskola*. However, the school decides when each subject is introduced.

Defining objectives

The most common basis on which educational objectives are defined is that of the general aim. The central education authorities lay down principles for the development of the curriculum guidelines in a very general way.

Table 10: Definition of objectives

	AT	FI	SE	IS	NO
General aims	*	*	*	*	*
Minimum aims for end of cycle	*		*		
Operational aims	*		*		*

Organising course content and teaching methods in each subject area

Although decisions on the organisation of content and methods in each subject area are taken at national or regional level, teachers in all these countries have considerable freedom in organising course content as well as in choosing teaching methods.

Table 11: Decisions on organisation of content and methods

	AT	FI	SE	IS	NO
National ministry	Guidelines and principles	Guidelines and principles	Guidelines and principles	Guidelines and principles	Guidelines and principles
Regional ministry	Guidelines and principles				
Local		Guidelines and principles	Guidelines and principles		
School/teacher	Practical implementation	Guidelines and principles / Practical implementation	Guidelines and principles / Practical implementation	Practical implementation	Guidelines and principles / Practical implementation

Methods of assessment

In general, assessment at this level of education is organised by teachers. They observe pupils' progress in class work, homework and tests. But in Sweden there are some national tests at the end of the fifth (not obligatory) and the ninth years of compulsory school. Nationally coordinated examinations also exist in Iceland and Norway, but only in the final year of compulsory education.

Table 12: Development of assessment tools

	AT	FI	SE	IS	NO
National level			*	*	*
School/teacher	*	*	*	*	*

Synopsis of decision-making levels

Table 13: Overview of the place of decision-making for different aspects of the education programme

	List of Subjects	Minimum Competence	Assessment Tools	Subject Timetable	Methods	Textbooks
AT	Ministry	School, teachers	Ministry, school, teachers	Ministry, school, teachers	Ministry, school, teachers	Ministry school, teachers
FI	Ministry	School, teachers	Ministry, school, teachers	Ministry, school, teachers	School, teachers	School, teachers
SE	Ministry	Ministry	Ministry, school, teachers	Ministry, school, teachers	School, teachers	School, teachers
IS	Ministry	Ministry	School, teachers	Ministry	School, teachers	Ministry, school, teachers
NO	Ministry	School, teachers	School, teachers	Ministry, school, teachers	School, teachers	School, teachers (from list of textbooks approved by central authorities)

Ministry = national or regional/provincial/municipal level.

National data on decisions on the development of programmes of education

Austria

Development and content

In **Austria,** responsibility for the development of programmes of education rests with the Federal Ministry of Education. The education programmes for primary schools, secondary general schools and special schools are issued by ministerial decree. Members of the education programme task forces at the Federal Ministry of Education and Cultural Affairs review the programmes for primary education as regards general provisions for primary education, local geography, history and biology, German/reading/writing, German for pupils of non-German mother tongue, mathematics, music (including choral singing and

instrumental playing), drawing or drawing/handwriting, handicraft, physical education (including the optional practical exercises), modern foreign languages (e.g. English, French), road safety, drama, creativity in music, creativity in art, fostering of special interests and of particularly gifted children, and mother-tongue practice. As in the legislative process, draft decrees on the programme of education must be presented to the interested parties in a consultation process.

The federal education authorities in the *Länder (Landesschulräte)*, are entitled to issue additional provisions on the education programmes in line with local requirements.

Under the school autonomy provisions (fourteenth amendment to the legislation on school organisation), schools were granted a limited say in the development of curricula. In primary education, this new competence is confined to non-compulsory subjects (optional exercises).

Curricula cover general provisions, general educational aims (target-oriented), general didactic principles (guidelines), number of teaching hours per subject, and educational and instructional aims (target-oriented) and content (covering the subject-matter) as well as the didactic principles (guidelines) for individual subjects.

The flexible nature of curricula leaves teachers considerable latitude in selecting and emphasising, timing, defining and organising course content and in selecting teaching methods and tools according to different didactic aspects. In selecting and emphasising the course content within a given subject area, a balance must be sought between social, emotional, intellectual and physical education.

Applicability of the Official Guidelines

Private schools with a public-sector equivalent (e.g. private primary schools, with approximately 2.3 % of all pupils) are subject to the same legal provisions as their public-sector counterparts. They teach according to the programme of education for public schools and, within this framework, enjoy the same scope for independent decision-making. Pupils who have attended private schools which do not meet these requirements must sit a special examination (*Externistenprüfung*) at public or officially recognised schools in order to obtain qualifying diplomas.

Finland

Development and content

The law on the *peruskoulu/grundskola* lists the compulsory subjects for this level of schooling. Only parliament can alter the list. The *peruskoulu/grundskola* statute sets the minimum and maximum numbers of class hours per week, and the government sets the minimum number of hours for each subject over the entire six years of the lower level of the school. The municipality and schools decide whether they will provide more than the minimum number of hours of teaching in a subject, and how the class hours are to be divided over classes at each level.

The national board of education sets a national framework curriculum, which defines the general objectives of education and each individual subject, as well as the main content of the subjects. The schools and the teachers are, to a large extent, free to choose the methods they use to achieve these objectives. The municipalities set their curricula. Increasingly, however, the municipalities are exercising their power to approve individual curricula for each school. Centralised decisions at municipal level are made on, for example, the teaching of foreign languages.

The national framework curriculum for the *peruskoulu/grundskola* covers the following aspects:
- general aims of education and teaching,
- design of the local curriculum,
- remedial teaching,
- evaluation of pupils and the form of reports,
- inter-curricular issues,
- pupil counselling,
- aims and main content of subjects.

Applicability of the Official Guidelines

Non-grant-aided private education is practically non-existent in Finland. The curricular guidance also applies to privately maintained schools.

Sweden

Development and content

The alterations to the legislative framework for the school system which have taken effect in recent years have involved fundamental changes in the control and organisation of the schools, as well as in the conditions under which individual schools may operate. In December 1993, parliament passed legislation

laying down new curricular guidelines for the whole school system, geared to the new goal- and result-related governing system for schools. As further described below, this will mean extensive changes in the curriculum, syllabi and timetables as well as in the marking system during compulsory education in the next few years.

The new system took effect in the 1995/96 school year for years 1 to 7 of the compulsory school, compulsory schools for the mentally retarded and special schools, and for all Sami schools *(Sameskolar)*. Pupils in the eighth and ninth years will be able to finish school under the present system, but the reform will be fully implemented as from the 1997/98 school year.

Each municipal council and county council appoints one or more committees responsible for ensuring that educational activities are conducted in accordance with government regulations and guidelines and that the external conditions of education are as appropriate and favourable as possible. The committee or committees responsible for schools are obliged to ensure that, amongst other things, schools are built and sufficient facilities are otherwise provided, that the activities of schools in the area of the municipality are co-ordinated, that qualified teachers and school staff are employed and receive in-service training, that municipal funds are allocated for school activities, that it is made possible for the goals laid down in the curricula to be achieved and that the general guidelines are complied with. In practice, it is the responsibility of the local committees to ensure that Swedish schools maintain equivalent standards all over the country.

Every municipality is required to set out the general objectives for its schools in a school plan, which is adopted by the municipal council. The municipality is obliged to follow up and evaluate the school plan and to provide the government with reports on facts and circumstances of relevance to the assessment of educational activities. In addition, every school has to devise a work plan, based on the curriculum and local priorities. The scheme of work also has to be followed up and evaluated.

In order to ensure equivalent standards throughout the country, a timetable from 1 July 1995 has been laid down by parliament, annexed to the education law *(Skollagen)*, which provides a minimum number of teaching hours over the entire compulsory education period. The municipalities are free to organise the timetabling of subjects. Teachers themselves, within the framework of the timetable, decide upon the allocation of teaching time between different classes.

Applicability of the Official Guidelines

Private schools must be approved by the national education agency, and must provide knowledge and skills which essentially correspond, in terms of their nature and level, to the knowledge and skills provided by the public compulsory schools.

Iceland

Development and content

The Ministry of Culture and Education issues a national curriculum guide which covers the entire period of compulsory education. The most recent one dates from 1989. It gives individual schools increased freedom to achieve the aims of the guide and encourages them to adopt school curricula which reflect their individual situation and the characteristics of the community and individual school.

The national curriculum guide of 1989 prescribes the framework for the organisation and operation of *grunnskólar* and for the evaluation of teaching to coordinate these aspects; it lays down the goals and aims of teaching, both in general and with regard to individual subjects, and provides the basic guidelines for teaching, the school environment and the evaluation of the functioning of the school.

In addition, the guide provides various explanations, instructions and suggestions regarding the functioning of the school, concerning, for instance, the role of the teacher, innovation and development in schools, school curricula, cooperation between home and school, and the use of school time.

Applicability of the Official Guidelines

The national curriculum guide applies equally to both public and private schools. On the other hand, both public and private schools have considerable latitude within its framework to organise their activities and operations in various ways.

Norway

Development and content

The Ministry of Education, Research and Church Affairs is responsible for all matters relating to the entire education system including the curriculum guidelines, which lay down a binding framework for work in the school and the subject matter which all pupils are required to study at their level of ability. The

Ministry determines the objectives in each subject area and designates the most important areas of knowledge and skills.

The curriculum guidelines indicate the allocation of time to the various subjects in terms of weekly lessons per subject for each of the three-year phases of compulsory education. Each school then decides within this framework how many weekly lessons there will be in each subject each year.

Applicability of the Official Guidelines

Private schools (1.5% of all pupils) must match the standards set in municipal schools.

3. Criteria for the development of primary or single structure school curricula

Austria

The primary school curriculum, which is issued by way of a decree, provides a broad and flexible framework for primary school teaching. In the first four years of education, the primary school is required to give all pupils a common grounding, so that children receive a fundamental and well-balanced education in the social, emotional, intellectual and physical spheres. The primary school curriculum places particular emphasis on humane and child-centred primary education.

The revised curriculum of 1986 stressed the following aspects:

- basic education for all pupils;
- priority to be given to individualised guidance, especially during the transition phase;
- a smooth transition from pre-school to primary education;
- adoption of new findings of educational research in education in the primary school curriculum.

The pinciples of progressive education, such as child-centredness, action-centredness and openness, and principles which contribute to meeting new educational requirements arising from social necessity, such as compensation and emancipation, well-balanced education, intercultural learning, and the realisation of the communicative approach, have all come to bear on curricular design.

As a general rule, curricular development takes institutional, methodological, technical and social changes and trends into account.

Finland

Parliament decides the subjects to be taught in the *peruskoulu/grundskola*. The government makes the decisions on the minimum number of courses over the entire six years of the lower stage and the three years of the upper stage of compulsory school. The national board of education sets a national framework curriculum, which describes the general objectives of education and the subjects, as well as the main content of the subjects. The framework curriculum is based on a concept of values, general education and the role of the school, as well as an understanding of knowledge and learning based on research.

Within the framework of the minimum and maximum number of hours, the schools are free in their choice of methods to achieve the objectives. They can decide, for instance, to which classes a subject is taught, how groups are composed for teaching purposes, what methods and materials they use and how they evaluate pupils' work.

Sweden

The government lays down educational objectives, the content of teaching subjects and guidelines for the curriculum. The goals and guidelines for education specified in the Education Act (decided by parliament), the curriculum and the syllabi (decided by the government), are worked out in detail in local planning. The measures the municipality intends to take in order to attain national goals for the school must be clearly stated in the school plan of each school, which has to be approved by the municipal council.

The work plan for the individual school must specify not only how the goals are to be realised but also how the activity as a whole is to be carried out and organised. Goals for the work of the school as a whole are thus set up. Teachers and pupils together draw up learning goals which, in combination with the needs and preconditions of different groups of pupils, provide the basis for selecting different working methods.

Iceland

The Icelandic parliament, the *Althing*, is responsible for legislation regarding *grunnskóli*. The Ministry of Culture and Education issues the national curriculum guide at varying intervals as required, in addition to

regulations on the running of schools and the academic calendar to be used as a guideline in allocating hours of teaching to the various subjects. The national curriculum guide lays down the main aims of schools in general and objectives for individual subjects, together with basic guidelines concerning teaching, the school environment and evaluation of school operations. The curriculum guide places emphasis on continuity in education throughout compulsory education, and an increase in the level of difficulty and in the demands made on pupils. Schools have extensive freedom to determine their teaching methods and the focus of their studies within the framework of the national curriculum guide and they are encouraged to develop their own school curricula.

Norway

Parliament takes decisions on the subjects to be taught. The Ministry lays down educational objectives, subject content and guidelines for the curriculum, including teaching methods.

Within this framework, schools develop local curriculum guidelines.

4. Frequency of review of programmes

Table 14: Date of the last review of the programme

Austria	1994 Curriculum
Finland	1994 Framework Curriculum
Sweden	1994 Curriculum Guidelines
Iceland	1989 Curriculum Guidelines
Norway	1987 Curriculum Guidelines

National data on frequency of programme reviews

Austria

The curriculum for primary schools promulgated in 1963 has been amended in some parts on several occasions, first in 1965 and later at one- to three-year intervals. Major progress was achieved by the curricular reform of 1986. For the first time since 1945, an amendment was based on school experiments conducted over several years and it covered almost all compulsory subjects and optional exercises.

The latest minor review of the curriculum took place in 1994.

Finland

The national framework curriculum can be reviewed when necessary. The present framework is so flexible that there will probably be no need to change it for some years. There is no legislation on the frequency of reviews. The curriculum of an individual school can be changed very frequently if its self-evaluation indicates that this is necessary.

Sweden

There are no rules governing how often a programme of education must be reviewed. Reworking of education programmes takes place when the need arises in response to government decisions.

Iceland

A review of the present curriculum guide of 1989 is being prepared.

Norway

New programmes appear every 10 to 15 years.

5. Mechanisms to control the implementation of education programmes

There is no inspectorate as such in Finland, Sweden, Iceland or Norway. However, the government and/or local authorities, as well as individual schools, are required to monitor and evaluate programmes of education in relation to their objectives. This situation is exceptional in the European Union, where Austria and all the other Member States (except Denmark) have an inspectorate organised at national, regional or local level.

Table 15: Types of control of the implementation of educational programmes

	AT	FI	SE	IS	NO
National examination			*	*	National system of evaluation for the compulsory school
Inspection	*				
Local authority	*	*	*	Regional and school level	*

National data on the mechanisms to control the implementation of education programmes

Austria

The education system in Austria has a long tradition of school inspection. School inspection is headed by provincial school inspectors responsible for an entire *Land*. At compulsory education level, provincial school inspectors are assisted by district school inspectors.

As the curriculum is laid down by decree, all teachers must abide by its contents and requirements. However, the law on school education states that teachers have to accomplish the mission of the Austrian school system through responsible and self-reliant teaching and educational work. The law thus ties the individual teacher's work to the mandate of the Austrian school system and, in particular, to the individual school types with their different educational and instructional goals. In their work, the teachers therefore have to rely on an annual plan which is a curriculum adapted to each class or situation. Implementation of the programmes is monitored by headmasters and the school inspectorate.

Finland

There is no inspectorate as such in Finland.

The municipality approves the curriculum for the period of compulsory education, which is based on the national framework curriculum. The heads and the teachers of the schools are obliged to follow the curriculum for, and the legislation on, the compulsory school. There is no unified control mechanism, but the national board of education is responsible for national follow-up and evaluation and for central development within the school sector.

Education and instruction are public services in Finland and for this reason the users react if they are inadequate. School activities and education are under the control of the municipal body responsible for education (education board or equivalent). Schools must meet the general statutory requirements. Because of the high level of the Finnish teacher education system, teachers' proficiency and capacity to fulfil curricular aims is trusted. Inspection, guidance, and control visits have been almost completely abandoned. Even though provincial state offices, *lääninhallitus*, do have a statutory duty to supervise education in their region, this supervision is in practice secondary control, not active inspection.

Sweden

There is no inspectorate as such in Sweden, but the national agency for education (the central authority for supervision of the school system) is responsible for national follow-up, evaluation and supervision of all school activities, and central development work in the school sector.

Iceland

There is no inspectorate as such in Iceland.

Heads (called *skólastjóri*) of *grunnskólar* are responsible for ensuring that their schools operate in accordance with the laws and regulations and the national curriculum guide. Twice a year they are required to report to the Minister of Culture and Education on their schools' operations. The regional educational officers are responsible for supervising the daily operation of schools and the school boards (*skólanefnd*) are responsible for ensuring that all children attend *grunnskóli*. At the conclusion of compulsory schooling, at age 16, pupils sit a nationally coordinated examination in four subjects (Icelandic, mathematics, English and Danish/other Nordic language).

Norway

There is no inspectorate as such in Norway. However, the national education offices established in each county in 1992 are invited to discuss educational matters with the Ministry.

The municipality and the individual schools have a considerable degree of autonomy. But the national education authorities still have an over-riding responsibility to ensure that national objectives are taken into account in the best possible way. Against this background, a national system of evaluation of the compulsory school has been developed using examinations/tests, statistics, a framework of learning and development, school based evaluation, learning outcomes and area evaluations.

At local level, school-based evaluation serves as a control on the implementation of curricula.

6. Definition of course content

6.1 Subjects taught (ages 6 to 9)

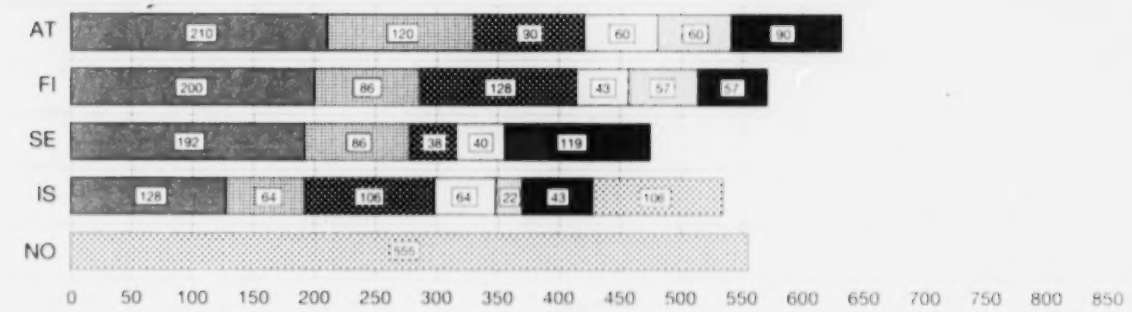
The list of compulsory subjects is very similar in the curricula of Austria, Finland, Sweden Iceland and Norway. All these countries include the mother tongue, mathematics, religion, physical education and art and crafts.

A second language also appears in the programmes as an optional or compulsory subject. English is usually the first foreign language and it is compulsory in Sweden and Norway.

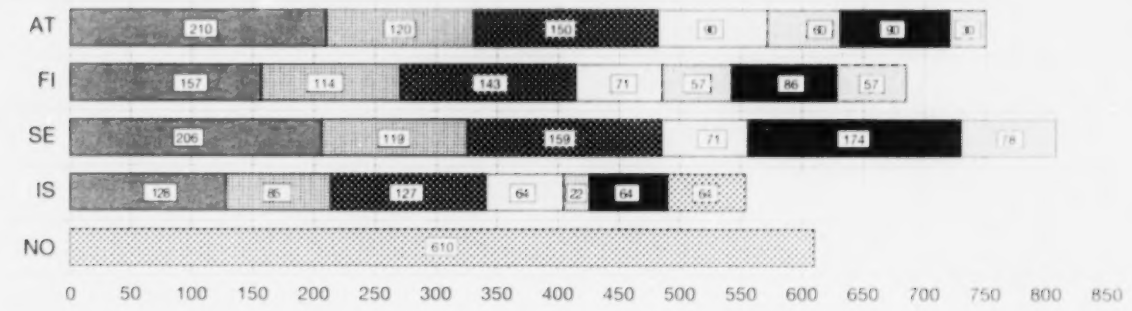
6.2 Annual hours of teaching of each subject (ages 6 to 9)

Graph 7: Annual hours of teaching of each subject

A. At the start of schooling (around age 6/7)



B. In the course of schooling (around age 9)



Flexible programme
Foreign languages
Human and natural sciences
Religion/ethics
Sport
Artistic activities
Mathematics
Mother tongue

Source: Eurydice.

Finland: Figures are approximations and there are differences between schools. At age 7, figures are calculated on the basis of 20 hours a week. At age 9, figures are calculated on the basis of 24 hours a week.

Sweden: Figures represent the fourth year of *grundskola* (pupils aged 10).

Iceland: Most of the flexible time is used for Icelandic and mathematics teaching.

Norway: The allocation of time to the various subjects is given in terms of weekly lessons for the three-year block.

7. Social aims in the school programmes

Austria

Acquisition of social behaviour, in terms of mutual help and support, developing and accepting rules.

To develop self-esteem.

To teach pupils a better understanding of different cultures, languages and traditions.

Finland

To acquire an overall development of personality.

To teach pupils to be ready to cooperate, to have consideration for other people, to take care of themselves and their environment.

To provide the means to acquiring ways of gathering information and processing it, etc.

To enhance sustained development, to understand and tolerate multiculturalism, to achieve physical, mental and social well-being, to become a citizen.

To learn about international education, consumer education, family education, media studies.

Sweden

To develop a sense of curiosity and the desire to learn.

To develop their own individual ways of learning.

To strengthen the habit of independently formulating standpoints based not only on knowledge but also on rational and ethical considerations.

To acquire a sound grasp of school subjects.

To develop a rich and varied language and understand the importance of cultivating it.

To learn to work both independently and together with others.

To learn to communicate in foreign languages.

To acquire sufficient knowledge and experience to be able to make well-considered choices in relation to further education and vocational orientation.

To learn to use knowledge as a tool in order to formulate and test assumptions and also solve problems, to reflect on experiences and to examine critically and evaluate statements and relationships.

Iceland

To prepare pupils for life and work in a democratic society which is continuously developing. School operations should thus be conditioned by tolerance, Christian ethics, and democratic cooperation.

To encourage open-mindedness among pupils and increase their understanding of the situation of others, the environment, Icelandic society and its history and unique characteristics, and the obligations of individuals towards society.

To acquire knowledge and skills and learn working practices.

To lay the foundation for independent thinking on the part of pupils and to foster their ability to cooperate with others.

Norway

To teach pupils to read, write, calculate and enter into dialogue and cooperation with others.

To bring to life cultural heritage and a Christian and moral upbringing.

To develop mental and physical abilities and knowledge.

To acquire intellectual freedom, tolerance, a caring attitude and responsibility.

8. Specific guidance on methods

Iceland, Norway and a majority of the Member States of the European Union recommend in their programmes of education the need to differentiate in teaching methods in accordance with pupils' abilities.

The official documents from Austria, Finland, Sweden, Iceland and Norway all place emphasis on remedial teaching for pupils with learning difficulties.

Table 16: Recommendations in the education programmes

	AT	FI	SE	IS	NO
Differentiated teaching	*	*	*	*	*
Integration of subjects	*	*	*	*	*
Group activities	*	*	*	*	*
Pupil support	*	*	*	*	*
Learning through play	*	*		*	

National data on specific instructions on method in programmes and official directives

Austria

For primary education to be tailored to children's needs and to be lively and stimulating, the curriculum spells out a number of approaches teachers may use to guide pupils from a play-oriented pattern at the pre-school level, to conscious, target-oriented and self-reliant learning. These approaches include play learning, open learning, project-oriented learning, learning by discovery, by investigation, by repetition, by practising etc.

Cooperative social learning such as partner or group work is an important feature of social learning.

In order to avoid overloading or underworking pupils, differentiation of education and requirements has been encouraged, recognising the considerable differences between individual first-year pupils. Internal differentiation is achieved by a differentiation of tasks, different social forms, use of different media or materials, or the degree of support provided by the teacher.

Remedial teaching is addressed in particular to pupils with learning difficulties. This type of teaching is designed to strengthen pupils' confidence in their own skills through continuous improvement in performance, thus laying the foundation for a willingness to achieve.

Interdisciplinary and project-oriented teaching plays a major role when it comes to the practical implementation of the educational principles of health education, reading, media, sex education, speech, road safety, business and trade, music, environmental education, civics and intercultural learning. It is essential to coordinate different subjects in teaching and to use existing cross links effectively.

Finland

The law on the *peruskoulu/grundskola* stipulates that education and teaching at this level of education should be provided in accordance with the age and abilities of the pupils. The national framework curriculum gives no instructions regarding differentiation, because teachers should take the pupil's abilities into consideration in every subject.

The law mentions that the *peruskoulu/grundskola* curriculum includes cross-curricular themes. The framework curriculum gives several examples of these. They can be carried out by cooperation between subjects, by broad themes or projects.

The framework curriculum refers in several places to learning the methods for information gathering and processing as well as methods that give pupils a chance to discuss and interact with others. These references are not, however, official guidelines or instructions. The teachers themselves choose the methods, materials and aids that they use.

Support for pupils with learning difficulties is included in an ordinance of the law on the *peruskoulu/grundskola*, in other words, teaching must match the abilities of the pupils. The teacher must give individualised teaching to every pupil. Remedial teaching is arranged when necessary.

It is recommended that early teaching, i.e. the teaching of the 7- and 8-year-olds who are starting school, should include learning through play.

Sweden

There is no state-regulated guidance on methods to be used in teaching.

Iceland

The national curriculum guide places emphasis on variety in the teaching methods used in school. Teaching methods have to be selected in accordance with the overall educational aims, the age, maturity and ability of the pupils involved in each case, the nature of the subject material and the educational environment. In the earliest years, considerable emphasis is placed on integrating the various subjects. Teachers bear the professional responsibility for choosing the methods they consider most favourable to the achievement of the educational aims.

Legislation on compulsory education stipulates that all pupils, including those who deviate from the normal developmental pattern, have the right to appropriate teaching. In the first years of *grunnskóli*, i.e. 6- to 12-year-olds, pupils are taught in mixed groups which may include individuals of very varied ability, and the teaching must be suited to the needs of each and every one of them. The national curriculum guide makes provision for special support for pupils who deviate from normal maturity and ability, i.e. for children with special educational needs.

Norway

One chapter in the curriculum guidelines is about the learning environment and teaching methods, but there are no regulations specifying the teaching methods to be used in primary schools. The curriculum guidelines state certain principles on which teachers are supposed to base their planning and educational activities. One of these principles is education adapted to the needs of the children and in accordance with their abilities and aptitudes *(tilpasset opplæring)*.

Teachers in compulsory education are often responsible for pupils with special needs, and the teacher's task is to develop individual teaching plans for these children. The aim is that special education should as far as possible be provided in the local environment.

It is the teacher's responsibility to find suitable methods for the group of pupils and their level of knowledge and skill in the different subjects.

9. Subject textbooks

Austria

Textbooks are approved by the Federal Ministry of Education and Cultural Affairs on the basis of the uniform national education curriculum after evaluation by an expert body. Since 1972, textbooks have been given to pupils free of charge by a special government-backed fund earmarked for families *(Familienlastenausgleichsfonds)*. In March of each year, all schools hold textbook conferences with parental involvement to select textbooks from the official textbook lists. The schools are then given vouchers for the textbooks selected to enable them to place group orders with the booksellers for years 1 to 8. The textbooks are then issued to pupils by the subject teachers or the headteacher.

Finland

The textbooks are published by commercial companies. The teachers are free to decide whether they use textbooks or not. They are also free to choose the kind of textbook they prefer.

Sweden

Textbooks are very often published by commercial firms. The teachers have the right to use or not to use a textbook in the subject they are teaching. Teachers are also free to choose whatever textbooks they need.

Iceland

The national centre for educational materials provides by far the largest proportion of publications for *grunnskóli*, but teachers are free to choose books from private publishers as well. There are no prescribed textbooks, but if questions arise whether or not a book complies with the conditions of the law or the curriculum, the Ministry of Culture and Education will decide the matter.

Norway

There are no prescribed textbooks, but all textbooks must be submitted for approval to a central authority, the national centre for educational resources. This requirement does not apply to supplementary materials.

Table 17: Controls over textbooks and levels of freedom of choice in their use

	AT	FI	SE	IS	NO
Prescribed					
Limited choice					
Freedom of choice for teachers	*	*	*	*	
All subjects	*	*	*	*	
Main subjects					
Private publications		*	*	*	
Private publications under control	*				
Official publications			*	*	

10. Composition of classes in official directives and programmes

Austria

Numbers permitting, each year in primary school is equivalent to one class. When the number of pupils is too low, several years are grouped together in one class.

Age-based classes are mixed-ability groupings without setting. The educational programme lays down the principles of individualisation and internal differentiation to take account of different talents, different educational backgrounds, and different social, emotional and cultural backgrounds. Factors which may be taken into account in a continuous re-grouping within an age-based class are interest, self-appraisal, educational background, pace of learning, friendships formed etc.

Remedial teaching will allow pupils with learning difficulties to catch up with their peers and to bridge gaps by individually targeted exercises, intensive guidance and a lengthier revision of some course content.

Finland

There are no official directives concerning the composition of classes. The decisions are made in schools. In practice, classes are age-based.

Sweden

Pupils are divided into groups and classes by decision of the headteachers.

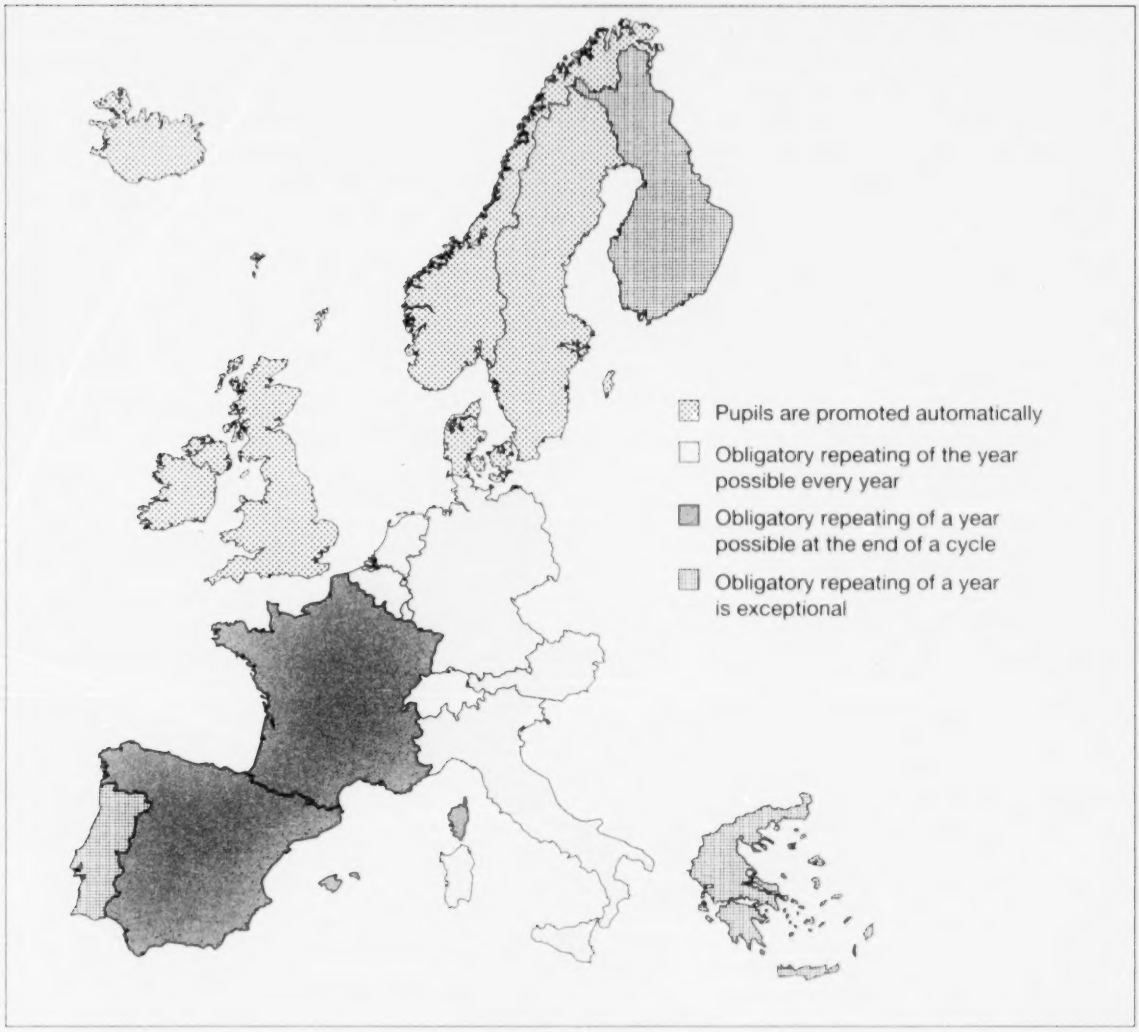
Iceland

The legislation concerning *grunnskóli* includes guidelines on the maximum number of pupils in classes in each year. There are also guidelines on the combination of several years into one class in rural schools, i.e. on the number of pupils in each class. Classes are organised by age. These provisions are also included in the Ministry of Culture and Education's guideline academic calendar, which prescribes the number of hours of teaching. Between ages 6 and 12 years, emphasis is placed on integrating pupils with varying needs and abilities.

Norway

Pupils are allocated to classes, which are the units for both teaching and administration. Classes are organised by age.

B Assessment, Promotion and Certification


Pupils are promoted automatically
Obligatory repeating of the year possible every year
Obligatory repeating of a year possible at the end of a cycle
Obligatory repeating of a year is exceptional

Source: Eurydice.

National data on assessment, promotion and certification

Austria

Assessment

The law on school education and the relevant ordinance on assessment lay down in detail the assessment of a pupil's performance.

Austria has no national standardised assessment procedures. In primary education, pupils' achievements are primarily assessed by continuous monitoring of their progress in classroom activities. School tests are held from the fourth year onwards, with written assessments of performance in German and mathematics. In primary education there are no oral examinations.

Pupils are given marks on the basis of 1=very good, 2=good, 3=satisfactory, 4=sufficient, 5=insufficient.

Primary schools issue term reports and annual reports. These school reports must specify the name, type and address of the school, its special orientation, the pupil's personal details, all assessments for the year, and the pupil's resulting qualifications or disqualifications.

Pupils are assessed against curricular targets and in respect of the progress of classroom instruction.

Parents are informed about their children's assessment in school reports at the end of the school year *(Zeugnis)* and after the first semester *(Schulnachricht)*.

Promotion

Promotion is automatic from the first to the second year, as these years form a single organisational unit (*Grundstufe 1*). Pupils may repeat the first year on a voluntary basis.

From the second year onwards, pupils are allowed to move up to the next higher class if they pass, i.e. they are not assessed as "insufficient" in any compulsory subject. Assessment in the compulsory subjects of music, art, handicraft and physical education is irrelevant for purposes of moving on to the next class. An "insufficient" in any of these subjects is no obstacle to continuing to the next class.

Pupils who are not entitled to move up to the next class may repeat the year they have failed, provided they do not exceed the maximum number of years allowed for this stage of schooling (10 years).

In contrast to secondary schooling, there are no repeat examinations.

Certification

There is no certification at the end of primary education. Pupils who successfully complete the fourth year of primary school may proceed to the general secondary school.

Finland

Assessment

Assessment is an ongoing part of the daily activities at school. Evaluation of the pupils is a part of the teaching process. Pupil evaluation is on two levels: the *peruskoulu/grundskola* law provides the basis for evaluation and for repeating the class. The national board of education has set out general guidelines for evaluation in the framework curriculum. The evaluation is carried out in the schools, once during the term and a second time at the end of the term.

Pupil evaluation is decided by the teacher and is based on continuous achievement in classwork, homework and tests organised by the teachers, and on the pupil's performance and interaction in school. Marking is based on the objectives defined in the curriculum. The courses are usually marked with numbers, on a scale from 4 to 10 (4=fail, 5=poor, 6=fair, 7=fair, 8=good, 9=excellent, 10=excellent), or in another way defined in the curriculum. In the first four years, it is also possible to replace the numerical marks with verbal evaluation. Assessment of the optional compulsory subjects and assessment of immigrant children can also be given verbally.

Promotion

Pupils who have completed all the work of the class acceptably are promoted to the next class. Pupils who obtain a fail mark (4) in one subject must pass an examination in the subject. Pupils who fail two subjects have to repeat the class. This is, however, exceptional at the lower stage of *peruskoulu/grundskola*.

Decisions as to whether a pupil has passed the year are taken by the headteacher and the pupil's teacher together.

Certification

Pupils are given reports evaluating their success in each subject once in the course of the term, and again at the end of the term. A pupil who has completed the nine years of *peruskoulu/grundskola* is given a leaving certificate. The national board of education has prescribed the forms of the certificates (reports), to indicate the information which must be given in them.

Sweden

Assessment

There are no examinations during compulsory education. Pupils' progress is monitored on the basis of continuous assessment. At present, no marks are awarded for the first seven years of school.

The new marking system is goal and achievement-related instead of normative. It is geared to special achievement criteria which have to be devised in conjunction with the syllabi so as to make clear to teachers and pupils alike the attainments which are necessary for the award of a certain mark. Final awards of nation-wide validity are to be made in the eighth year. These final awards will be on a three-point scale, pass, pass with credit, and pass with distinction.

Comparability will be achieved by means of national tests. All municipal schools will administer national subject tests in Swedish, English and mathematics at the end of the fifth year (not obligatory) and the ninth year. Swedish tests will also to be administered in independent schools.

Promotion

Pupils move automatically to a higher class. However, after consulting a pupil's parents, the headteacher may decide not to move a pupil up to the next class. The headteacher may also decide during an academic year to transfer a pupil to a higher class if the pupil is able to cope with that class and the pupil's parents give their consent.

Certification

There is no certification throughout the *grundskola*. A leaving certificate is awarded only at the end of a pupil's time at school. The certificate is awarded when compulsory school has ended, or earlier if the pupil has satisfactorily completed the ninth school year. Pupils who satisfactorily complete the ninth year after it is no longer compulsory for them to attend school may also be awarded the school leaving certificate.

Iceland

Assessment

Teachers in *grunnskóli* regularly assess the progress of their pupils and provide pupils and their parents with information on the progress of their studies at least twice each year. In the first classes of *grunnskóli*, actual marks are seldom given, but a general report is used instead. As the child progresses up the school, further marks are more commonly given on a scale of 1 to 10 (maximum), and this system predominates in the senior classes of *grunnskóli*.

The purpose of assessment by school and teacher is first and foremost to support teaching and learning and to provide pupils and their parents with information on the progress of their studies.

There are no nationally coordinated, publicly regulated examinations in *grunnskólar* until the final year, when all pupils sit the same compulsory written examination in Icelandic, mathematics, English and Danish/other Nordic language.

Promotion

Pupils in *grunnskóli* are automatically promoted from year to year. There is, however, provision for exceptionally gifted pupils to complete their compulsory schooling in nine years instead of 10. Pupils who are very slow to develop may also remain in *grunnskóli* for a longer period. It is, however, only rarely that pupils in Icelandic *grunnskólar* are slowed or accelerated in their studies.

Certification

There are no certificates awarded for work in *grunnskóli* except on completion of compulsory education.

Norway

Assessment

Parents and guardians must be informed of their child's progress at least twice a year, either in a personal meeting or by means of written reports. There is no formal assessment, and no marks at all are given during the first six years of *grunnskole*. Children's progress is based only on teachers' observations.

During the last period of *grunnskole*, pupils are given marks in compulsory subjects at least twice a year. Teachers are responsible for giving these marks. There is a final written examination in at least one subject (relevant subjects are Norwegian, mathematics and English) organised by the public authorities in the ninth year. Most pupils are also given an oral examination in one (or more) subject(s), including religion, social sciences and natural sciences, in addition to those already mentioned.

Promotion

Pupils move automatically to the next class at the end of the school year throughout compulsory education.

Certification

There is no certificate throughout the *grunnskole*. Only at the end of compulsory education do pupils receive a leaving certificate.

Table 18a: Use of standardised tests at national level

	In the course of primary or single structure education (for monitoring)	On transition from primary to lower secondary or from single structure to upper secondary (for guidance, selection or certification)
AT		
FI		
SE	Optional at age 12	At the end of *grundskola*
IS		At the end of *grunnskóli*, obligatory
NO		At the end of *grunnskole*

Table 18b: Promotion

	Automatic	Repeating possible each year	Repeating possible at end of cycle
AT	Pupils whose parents wish it may repeat the first year	From second year onwards	
FI	*	Exceptionally at lower stage of *peruskoulu/grundskola*	
SE	*		
IS	*		
NO	*		

Table 18c: Certification on completion of primary or first stage of single structure education

	Final certification with examination	Final certification without examination	No certification
AT			*
FI			*
SE			*
IS			*
NO			*

C Organisation and Staffing

Austria

In the primary school curriculum, the classes, which correspond to a school year, are combined to form two stages. Primary stage I covers the first two years and primary stage II the third and fourth years. Numbers permitting, each primary school class will correspond to one year. When the number of pupils is too low, several years will be combined into one class.

Pupils are taught by age groups. Primary school is organised without setting, so that the composition of classes is one of mixed abilities, in terms of performance, as well as social and educational background, motivation etc. To take account of these differences, the education programme embraces the principles of individualisation and internal differentiation. Factors which may be considered for grouping pupils are interest, self-appraisal, educational background, pace of learning, friendships formed etc. Internal differentiation is supported through adequate equipment of the school building and classrooms with teaching aids, audio-visual equipment, books etc.

With the exception of religious education and handicraft, primary education in the first four years rests on the class-teacher principle. Under the provisions of the law on school education, the headteacher must assign one teacher to every class as class teacher. Teachers may only be replaced at the end of the school year for compelling educational or other reasons.

Finland

In *peruskoulu/grundskola*, the pupils generally remain together as a class for the six years of the lower level. They are grouped by age. They can also have the same teacher for the whole six years. Usually, though, for the first two years a class has a teacher who is specialised in the teaching of the youngest children. For the next four years, the class is taught by another teacher. Class teachers usually teach all subjects, but some schools may have teachers specialising in a foreign language, physical education, music, craft or art. Some of these specialised teachers are shared by two or more schools.

Sweden

Pupils frequently attend the same school during the first six years of *grundskola*, although they might change teachers after the first three years.

Teachers take the children for practically all subjects in the first six years of *grundskola*. There are also specialist teachers for music, craft subjects, art/drawing and physical education from the intermediate level onwards.

The organisation and staffing can vary greatly between schools, as it is up to the individual school to decide on these matters.

Iceland

Pupils are grouped by year according to their ages.

In the first three years, the same teacher generally teaches all basic subjects to the class. The boundaries between individual subjects at this age level can be very indistinct because of the integration of subjects. Teaching is usually very varied in nature, and may take the form of whole-class teaching, small-group teaching, or individual teaching. As children move up into the higher years, the teaching becomes increasingly separated into individual subjects and the number of special subject teachers increases, for instance, in art and handicrafts, physical education, home economics and natural science.

In the senior classes of *grunnskóli*, the divisions between traditional subjects are clearer and teachers most commonly teach only a few subjects to a number of classes. Each class in *grunnskóli* has its class teacher, who generally teaches most of the general subjects to pupils from 6 to 12 years of age and at least one subject in the second stage of *grunnskóli*.

Norway

Classes are organised by age. Each class is kept together at least from the first to the sixth year and even to the ninth year.

Teachers in compulsory education are generally allocated by class, each class having a teacher responsible for the class *(klassestyrer)*, who generally teaches most subjects in the class. In the last block of *grunnskole*, there are some subject specialists, mostly in optional subjects (such as the second foreign language), in home economics and physical education. Each class still has a class teacher who teaches some subjects and handles the administration of the class. In most subjects, the class still remains a group despite the different teachers teaching the class.

The main rule for the allocation of teachers to classes is that the teacher should have the same group of pupils for several years. Consequently, classes can have the same teacher for the first six years, and change when entering year 7 of *grunnskole*. There are, however, many exceptions to this rule, the most common arrangement being to change teacher after the third year.

Table 19: Allocation of teachers

	Teacher remains with the class for several years	Teacher gives instruction in all basic subjects	Several specialist teachers by subject
AT	Yes	Yes	No
FI	Yes, usually classes 1and 2 and 3 to 6 of *peruskoulu/grundskola*	Yes	Yes, in some subjects such as foreign languages, physical education, music, craft or art
SE	Yes, usually for the first three years of *grundskola*	Yes	Yes, in some subjects such as music, craft and physical education
IS	Yes	Yes, the first seven years of *grundskóli*	Yes, in some subjects such as physical education, home economics, art and handcrafts
NO	Yes, the first six years of *grunnskole*	Yes, the first six years of *grunnskole*	Yes, the last three years in second foreign language, home economics and physical education

Chapter III

TRANSITION TO LOWER SECONDARY OR TO THE LAST YEARS OF SINGLE STRUCTURE EDUCATION

1. Admission conditions and guidance

Austria

Pupils make the transition from primary to secondary level I after their fourth year, at the age of 10. Apart from the upper cycle of primary school and special school, there are two school types in which they may continue: the general secondary school *(Hauptschule)* and the lower cycle of the academic secondary school *(Allgemeinbildende höhere Schule, AHS-Unterstufe)*.

Pupils who have successfully completed the fourth year of primary school may proceed to the general secondary school. The primary school staff meeting must decide on the pupils' aptitudes for admission to the academic secondary school. The requirement for entry is successful completion of all compulsory subjects, with assessment in German/reading and mathematics being not lower than "good". Pupils assessed "satisfactory" in one or both of these compulsory subjects may still be declared by the primary school staff meeting apt to attend academic secondary school if their other attainments and attitudes towards work give reason to believe that they will be able to cope.

Pupils whom the staff meeting considers unfit must sit an entrance examination before they can be admitted to academic secondary school. In any event, they must have passed the fourth year. Parents must be notified in writing of their child's unfitness for academic secondary school six weeks before the close of the school year, if they have enrolled their child for this school. The pupil then has to register for the entrance examination.

Obligatory entrance examinations for all pupils wishing to attend academic secondary school were suspended in 1971 and abolished in 1982.

Finland

The pupils continue automatically from the lower to the upper stage of *peruskoulu/grundskola*. The only condition is to have passed the sixth year, i.e. the terms are the same as for promotion from one class to another. There is no examination at this stage.

Sweden

The pupils continue their schooling automatically between the ages of 6/7 and 16 years. There are no conditions for transition throughout *grundskola*.

However, the headteachers of *grundskola* have been given overall responsibility for educational guidance. They have to ensure that pupils obtain guidance on the choices of education available as well as on further studies.

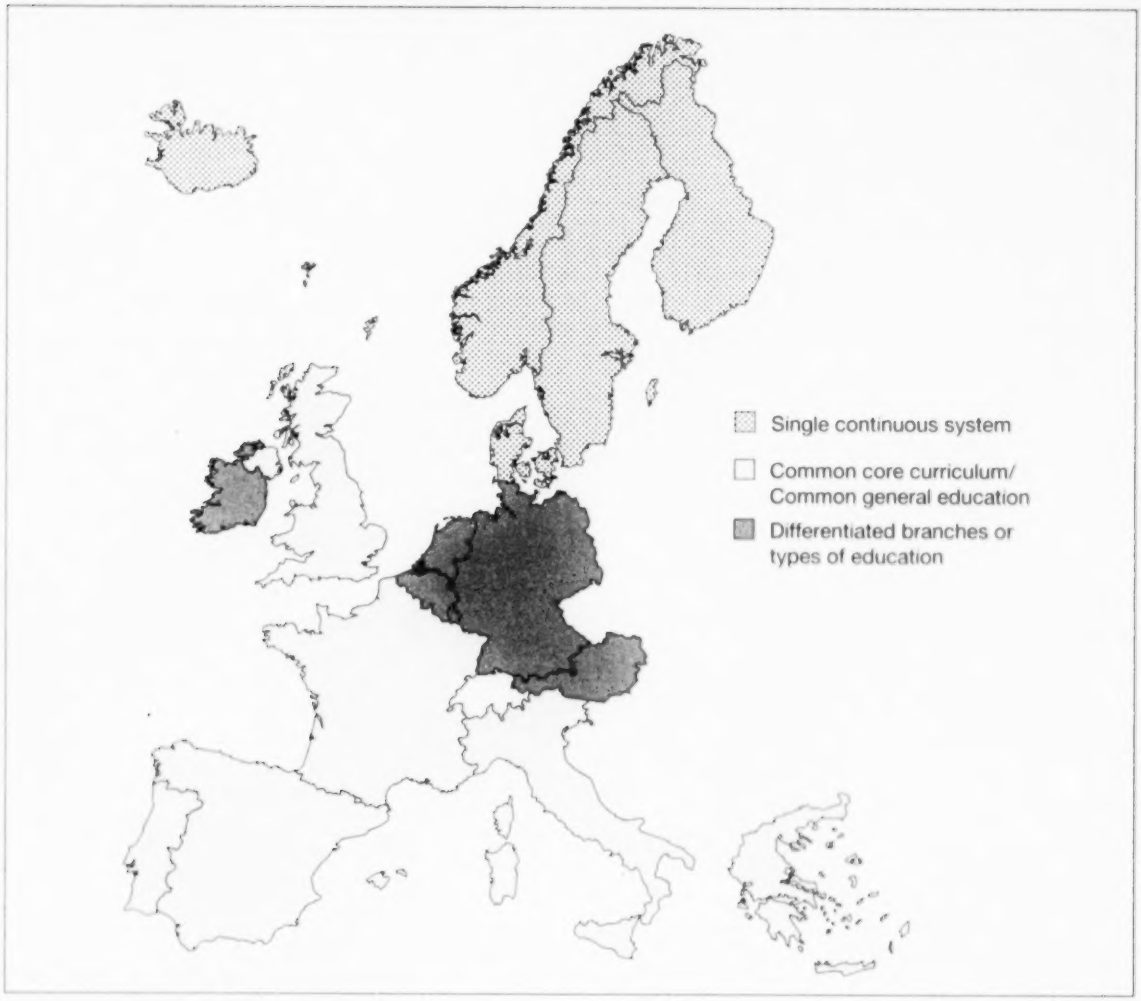
Iceland

Pupils continue their compulsory education automatically between the ages of 6 and 16. There are no conditions for the transition from the first to the second stage of *grunnskóli*. *Grunnskóli* is not subdivided into different stages, so the conditions for transition do not exist.

Norway

Pupils move automatically to the next class at the end of the school year throughout compulsory education *(grunnskole)*. There are no restrictions on the transfer from *barnetrinnet* to *ungdomstrinnet*.

Organisation of systems of lower secondary education or last years of single structure education


Single continuous system
Common core curriculum/ Common general education
Differentiated branches or types of education

Source: Eurydice.

Table 20a: Conditions of admission to lower secondary or the second stage of single structure education

	Successful completion of primary or first stage of single structure education	Entrance examination	Allocation to a particular stream of secondary education or second stage of single structure depending on results
AT	Annual report for year 4 (see National data on assessment, promotion and certification).	For general secondary school: no. For academic secondary school: yes, if the pupils have been assessed lower than "good" in German/reading and mathematics in the annual report and the staff meeting determines their unsuitability for academic secondary school.	There are two types of secondary school, one general and one academic.
FI		No	No
SE		No	No
IS		No	No
NO		No	No

Table 20b: Ages at which choices of direction are made

	Choice at age	Guidance courses on available choices
AT	10	
FI	About age 16 to enter upper secondary school	Between 13 and 16
SE	From 16 to enter upper secondary school	
IS	From 16 to enter upper secondary school	Between 15 and 16 (in some schools only)
NO	From 16 to enter upper secondary school	

2. The debate on the transition

Austria

The transition from primary school to secondary school is a critical event for both pupils and parents and therefore merits special attention from the educational point of view. Difficulties can arise out of the transition from the class-teacher system, characterised by a fixation on one single person, to the subject-teacher system, where pupils have to adjust to different teachers and teaching styles throughout the day. Primary school - in particular year 4 - will have to foster social flexibility and pupils' ability to adjust to changing requirements and environments as much as possible. Close cooperation between headmasters and teachers at primary and secondary school level, joint staff meetings, classroom visits, visits by primary school leavers to secondary schools, and joint activities and projects (sports events, excursions, school parties, exhibitions etc.) during the last weeks of the school year can help to ensure a smooth transition. Parental involvement, of course, is very important.

There is unanimous agreement on the need for a seamless, smooth transition from primary to secondary education, which should be substantially facilitated by the educational system. Disagreement prevails among educational policy-makers, scientists, educationists and others on whether it is reasonable, or justified, from an educational point of view, to divide pupils into different types of schools according to their individual abilities, and to initiate a selection process at the age of 10. The solutions that have been presented, and the approaches that are discussed, range from comprehensive school models to guidance levels and a further selective subdivision, by introducing a separate *Realschule*-form of secondary education, for instance, as was done in school experiments, or a separate school for highly gifted pupils, in order to cater more effectively for pupils' needs by providing additional types of school. As the adoption of many education laws, including those affecting school organisation, requires a two-thirds majority in the *Nationalrat*, the first chamber of the Austrian parliament, and while the different opinions remain hard to reconcile, fundamental change (e.g. a comprehensive school for those aged 10 to 14) is unlikely to occur for the time being.

Based on the recognition of a dynamic notion of gifted, and on changing factor structures of intelligence, the majority of educational scientists argue that selection at the age of 10 years is premature from a pedagogical point of view.

Finland

There is no such debate because of the single structure. The possibility of making the division into the two levels of the *peruskoulu/grundskola* less rigid is under discussion.

Sweden

There is no such debate because of the single structure. The problem does not exist in view of the uniformity of the education system.

Iceland

There is no such debate because of the single structure.

Both legislation on *grunnskóli* and the national curriculum guide emphasise the continuity of education from the commencement to the completion of compulsory education. There is no formal division

throughout *grunnskóli*, but most often the number of teachers taking a class increases, as do the distinctions between individual subjects. The curriculum guide emphasises that this transition should be made with as little trauma as possible for the pupils.

Norway

There is no such debate because of the single structure.

There is a debate about the impact which formal evaluation has on classroom teaching; one way to change teaching activities is to make the examination routines more similar to approved teaching methods.

Another aspect is the changing role of formal evaluation, as all pupils leaving the lower secondary schools now are entitled to three years of further education at upper secondary level.

ANNEX

Numbers of Pupils in Primary Education

	AT	FI	SE	IS	NO
1980/81	401 396	598 587	666 679	24 700	
1981/82	385 784	584 577	662 581	24 800	586 071
1982/83	368 338	575 416	658 127	25 000	576 910
1983/84	359 908	568 799	647 557	24 600	565 497
1984/85	349 030	563 757	630 505	25 000	549 637
1985/86	341 867	563 618	612 704	24 600	534 000
1986/87	342 378	564 149	600 122	24 600	520 190
1987/88	350 907	566 711	588 612	25 100	505 942
1988/89	361 067	571 644	580 199	25 400	492 769
1989/90	368 204	581 756	578 534	25 500	482 961
1990/91	371 971	587 129	578 359	29 900	473 074
1991/92	380 883	589 564	584 203	28 800	467 502
1992/93	383 202	588 069	594 291	29 200	
1993/94	382 204	584 483	600 392	28 800	

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EURYDICE

The European Education Information Network

OBJECTIVES

The role of the EURYDICE network, the European network for information on education, is to promote the exchange of information on education systems and on national policies in the field of education. It contributes to increasing mutual understanding and cooperation between the 15 Member States of the European Union.[1]

ORIGIN AND HISTORY

In 1976, when the Council and the Education Ministers adopted the Resolution on a first programme for cooperation in the field of education, they gave recognition to the importance, in this context, of exchanges of information and experience. It was on this basis that the EURYDICE network was set up and became operational in 1980. Ten years later, in 1990, the Council and the Ministers adopted a Resolution dealing specifically with EURYDICE and calling for a reinforcement of its services. The Treaty of Maastricht (Treaty on European Union) marked an important step forward, providing in the new Chapter 3, Article 126, for developing exchanges of information and experience on issues common to the education systems of the Member States. It has thus opened up for EURYDICE new prospects of which the Community education programme, SOCRATES, adopted on 14 March 1995, takes full account (Annex, Chapter III, Action 3, point 2). It is under this Programme that the development of EURYDICE will be assured from now on.

ORGANISATION AND ACTIVITIES

The network comprises **22 National Units**, most of which are located in the Ministries of Education[1]. The **European Unit**, established by the European Commission, coordinates the network's activities, publications and services. It also promotes exchanges between the National Units to meet the information needs of national and Community policymakers. On the basis of contributions from the network, it produces basic documents and comparative analyses on topics of interest to cooperation at Community level. EURYDICE is also increasingly called upon to fulfil the role of an "Observatory", in relation to the development of the education systems and policies in the European Union. Through the dissemination of its publications, the EURYDICE network also reaches a wide public in the education world. These publications are also accessible on Internet through the European Commission's Europa server (access code: http://www.cec.lu/en/comm/dg22/struct/struct.html).

SERVICES AND PRODUCTS

- Data bases on the education systems.
- Various publications on education in the Member States.

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March 1996

[1] Under the Agreement on the European Economic Area, Iceland, Norway and Liechtenstein are participating in the activities of the EURYDICE network in the same way as the Member States of the European Union. Moreover, from 1996, the network activities will be open to the central and eastern European countries.

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